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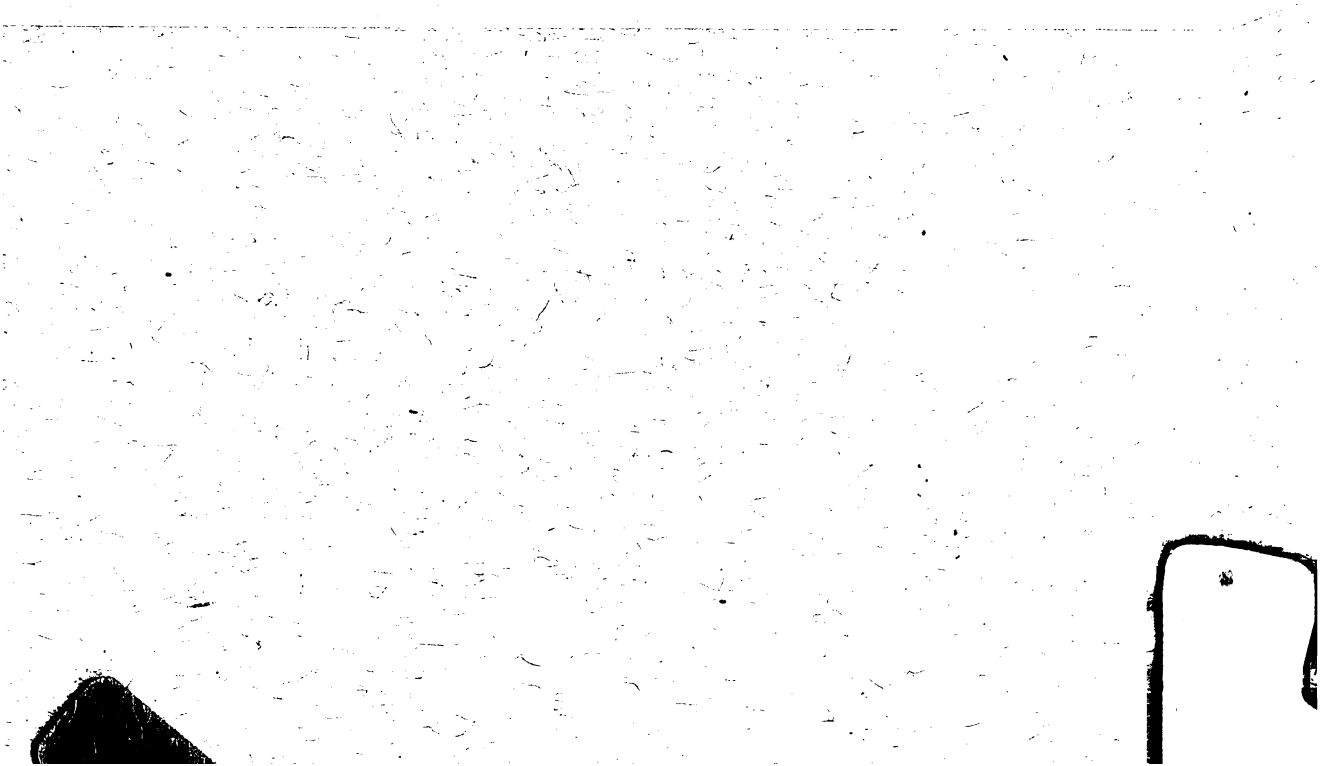

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THE MONEY SENSE

A NOVEL

BY

Haimard, Henrietta Eliza Vaughan, (Palmer)
JOHN STRANGE WINTER pseud.

AUTHOR OF

"BOOTLES' BABY," "THE TRUTH-TELLERS," "HEART AND SWORD,"
"A NAME TO CONJURE WITH," ETC.

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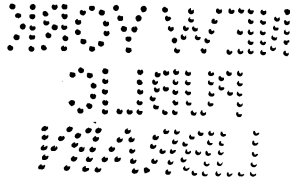

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THE MONEY SENSE.

CHAPTER I

'WHAT has she been doing now?' asked a soft woman's voice in a questioning tone.

'Doing!' was the reply, 'doing! Oh! always the same. It's the same old tale from morning till night. I am utterly sick of it. Oh! Gwyn, Gwyn, I'm so tired of hearing the recital of my own dark doings and misdeeds. Is it wicked that I want to be out in the world; that I want to be up and doing some bigger, better, nobler work than setting new collars and cuffs on Father's shirts—not even dress shirts, by the by? Has Mother no soul beyond under-linen and pots of jam?'

'Mother is only the natural outcome of a very young marriage,' Gwyn replied. Gwyn Torville was a widow, living at home for the sake of convenience, a woman who had lived her life, a

woman whose ideals had long ago been shattered, who had but too plainly seen the feet of clay under the garment of the idol of gold, and whose only remaining desire in this world was for peace —that peace which never comes upon a household where mother and daughters are each striving to go totally different ways.

'It ought to have taught her something,' muttered Angelique, dropping down in a heap on the hearthrug, and staring with great, grey, angry eyes at the flickering flames of the newly mended fire.

'It has taught her how to dovetail yesterday's dinner into to-day's,' said Gwyn mildly, 'and the inestimable value of white work.'

'Oh, yes, I know,' cried the girl on the hearth with a weary sigh. 'I know it all. And also when to judiciously ruffle Father into a temper against one of us. Also the whole duty of daughters, especially the unmarried ones. One ought to have no secrets from Mother, no aspirations that Mother hasn't had, one ought to ask leave to walk down the village, and to let Mother choose one's frocks, and not to mind when she travels round in her noiseless, flat-footed fashion, gathering up little items of information from one's letters and one's pockets. Oh! Gwyn, Gwyn, is there *no* way out of it?

Must I go on for ever living this useless little petty, paltry life? Why should it be so different for girls and for boys? Look at the difference that has always been made between the boys and us. Jack went out as soon as he left school; he earns his own money, and spends it as he will; he lives his own life, he is making his own way; he is beholden to nobody, independent, unfettered, free.'

'Jack works,' put in Gwyn quietly.

'I am ready to work—longing to work—aching to work,' cried Angelique passionately. 'I ask you, Gwyn, did you ever consider me lazy when there was anything worth doing? If I am going to a dance, I don't mind working day and night at dressmaking! You know that. It's a small thing, I know, but it shows what I can do. Straws show which way the stream flows, the whole world knows that! If we want a room changing about—who works with such a will as I? No one—and as for Mother, her work consists chiefly in making everybody feel that they are doing nothing, and that the whole burden has fallen on her. Oh! Gwyn, I'm so sick of it all—I'm so sick of it.'

'I know you are,' said Gwyn, dropping her needlework on her knee, and looking with beautiful, compassionate eyes at the stormy face of

her impetuous younger sister. She was full of compassion. She had borne the heat and burden of the day, had gone through this phase of disquietude and craving after a life not wholly filled with petty domestic cares, she had married in a desperate moment the first man who came her way, had found herself, to use an old adage, 'out of the frying pan into the fire,' had put up uncomplainingly with a bad husband, had seen one frail baby life after another drop silently into the grave, and had come back to the old home, to the well-known trials, thankful for the smallest mercy in the shape of peace. She knew so well where the shoe pinched; she knew so well where the goads pricked; and she knew, too, the uselessness of trying to kick against the one or to walk off the other.

'Why can't they bring up boys and girls on an equal footing?' Angelique said piteously. 'What were we brought up for? The marriage market—nothing more or less! The boys were educated, properly educated, with thorough technical educations which would fit them for the lives they were intended to lead; they were put out, given a start, encouraged to do their best. But we—what was ever done for us? Just a cheap education, a smattering of this, a dabbling in that. We were meant and intended for no

career but marriage, and we were never given a good start even at that. Why, Mother will keep us stitching at shirts until Father and the boys are clogged up with shirts. But a frock—that is vanity, nothing but vanity. A dance is running after the world, an admirer is the abomination of wickedness, and a little harmless flirtation is "making oneself cheap;" and *she*, who was married at seventeen, she never did that. Oh! Gwyn, Gwyn, I'm so tired of it all.'

'But there's Gustave,' put in Gwyn in a mild voice.

'Gustave—ah, yes, Gustave is a love, a darling; but there are times, Gwyn, when even Gustave is useful as a scourge to flay me with. If I really loved Gustave as a girl ought to love the husband of her heart, I should never want to go to a dance, I should never want to mix with people until he came back again; if Gustave knew how flighty and fickle I am, he would put an end to himself, he would break his heart, and a great deal more. Oh! I've heard it all so often! And Gustave is away on the other side of the world. God only knows when he will come back again, or what we shall have to live on when he does. And yet—yet——'

'Yet you love him, my poor impetuous Angelique,' murmured Gwyn tenderly.

'Love him!' Angelique echoed, 'love him! Oh, dear God, how much, how much! But I have still the instinct of living, even though Gustave *is* on the other side of the world. I don't want him to come back to find that I have forgotten how to smile, or how to dress myself, to find me with my complexion gone to paste because I have sat stitching more under-things than I can ever wear out. I don't want to have forgotten how to enjoy things—that's not my idea of love. Gwyn, you know how I love Gustave, you know how I live for him, long for him, yearn and count the days to the joyful time when we shall meet again, but—but——'

'I think I know—go on,' said Gwyn.

'There are times,' Angelique went on, dropping her voice to a whisper, 'there are times when I feel that life might not be worth living if Gustave is all that Mother paints him. Yes, she talks and talks and talks of him, his looks, his family, his doings, his sayings, what he likes and what he dislikes, how he explains this and how he objects to the other, and the result is a Gustave whom I don't know, a Gustave whom I hate, a Gustave whom I could not, would not live with for a day! Oh! Let me tell you, even a Gustave is not an unmixed blessing.'

'But what would you do, dear?' Gwyn asked.

'Do? Anything—anything—so that I could get away from home and earn a living for myself, so that I could be independent and quiet.'

'And just when you were beginning to make headway, Gustave would come back again, and all your energy and effort would have been wasted,' Gwyn put in.

'Not wasted. Honest work is *never wasted!*' Angelique cried triumphantly.

'But you wouldn't go on with any work that you might have taken up.'

'I don't know. I should never be the worse off for having a profession at my fingers' ends.'

'But what could you do?'

'Anything—I wouldn't care what! I play above the average, though I've never had lessons worth calling by the name. The money,' speaking bitterly, 'was always wanted for the boys. I might go to Berlin and study under Madame Schumann for six months, and——'

'It would cost a fortune,' said Gwyn, half scared, married woman and widow as she was, by her sister's daring and enterprise.

'A fortune! Pooh! Next to nothing. You live in a *pension* for about a pound a week. The lessons would be the greatest expense.'

'And when you had done with her—I mean at the end of the six months?'

'I should be independent. There is always room for a good pianist, always. I should go to London, take rooms—you could live with me and share expenses if you liked—and get engagements. I should do well at it.'

'And if you got no engagements? I don't believe you would play well enough even if you went to Madame Schumann for six months. Supposing t hatyou found engagements impossible, what then?'

'Then—why, I should take up something else. There's the stage.'

'I don't believe Gustave would like that,' said Gwyn with decision.

'I know he would not. That was why I did not put it first. I would try everything else before I went in for that, just because of Gustave. I might take up art. Women make lots of money at art work nowadays—all those umbrella stands and plaques and things. I should enter at South Kensington and work for shops, and study hard for the Academy in between. I could do black and white and Christmas cards.'

'But why could you not work at home?' Gwyn asked. 'You would live for nothing. Mother would never expect you to pay her for that, no matter how much you might make. And then

you would have all the money to put by for the time when Gustave comes home.'

But Angelique shook her head. 'No, no, it couldn't be done that way. You must be on the spot, you must be in the swim, or you are out of it altogether. Besides, I should never get the time to do it in. Mother would always call it *a waste!* She would come buzzing round teaching me how to do it all, and irritating me till I didn't know black from white, or green from yellow. I tell you, I want to get out of it all—the everlasting fuss and worry and nagging, the morning, noon, and night of it all, and the unending catalogue of an impossible and preposterous Gustave's virtues. I want to be free.'

'I understand,' murmured Gwyn softly. 'I used to feel just like that once. Only—you must not forget, Angel, that to be free sometimes, oh, often means to be unsheltered; independence may mean having no one to turn to; earning a living doesn't always mean paying for pocket-money things, but for the stern necessities of a bare existence. Don't do anything rash. I know Mother is trying sometimes—oh! how well I know it!—but don't decide in a hurry; don't burn your boats behind you.'

'And you will help me to get away?' said Angelique eagerly.

'I'll do my best.'

'They will never let me go without you—you'll go if need be?'

'Yes, I will go if need be,' said Gwyn Torville steadily, a sudden blaze of light in her eyes. 'Oh, Angel,' she said, 'don't you think *I* sometimes feel it all still? I am ten years older than you, and life has been pretty much of a failure for me, but I have longings, aspirations, ambitions. I yearn to be free sometimes.'

'We will go together!' cried Angelique, catching hold of her sister's hand and holding it close.

For a moment Gwyn caught the girl to her and kept her fast in her arms. 'Dear Angel, *you* have a Gustave, and he loves you. I think sometimes you forget it.'

'No, no; dear Gustave—I worship him,' cried Angelique, who was thinking of her great schemes for asserting her independence.

'There is the bell for tea. Let us go down,' said Gwyn, going back soberly to everyday life.

The two went down the handsome stairs together. They were wide and shallow stairs, leading down into a spacious entrance hall, which was cold and cheerless, not an entrance hall of to-day with gay rugs and a wealth of bright colours, but sparsely furnished and chill both in atmosphere and aspect.

'Think what we might make of it,' said Angelique, as they went down; 'but, no, it would be a sin to cover up the marble pavement, and a crime to hang pictures and rubbish on the *painted* walls. And a fire would be reckless extravagance, and a tablecloth would look ridiculous. Ah! Letters!' she exclaimed, in a totally different tone.

She was down the remaining steps in half a minute and across the hall to the polished table under the window. Upon its shining and immaculate surface reposed several letters, among them one with a New Zealand postmark. Before Gwyn had reached the door of the dining-room, Angelique had torn the cover and was eagerly devouring the contents. As the elder sister laid her hand on the door an exclamation made her look back. 'Angel—what is it?' she asked; then turned and went nearer to her. 'Gustave is coming home? He has had good luck?'

Angelique put out her hand as if to ask for silence, devouring the letter with wide-open eyes the while. Then she folded the sheet and put it back in the envelope.

'I may as well tell you,' she said. 'Gustave is *never* coming back. Gustave has had luck, but it's not the kind of luck that he can ask me to

share. He is going to be married to somebody else—she's rich.'

'My poor Angel,' Gwyn began, but Angelique turned upon her with flaming eyes.

'For God's sake, don't *pity* me!' she cried, in a fierce undertone—'anything but that. But if you love me, help me to get away. If it is ragged over and ragged over, I shall go mad. Don't ask me any questions. I'll show you the letter, and you will know as much and as little as I know. You can tell them to-morrow—only, for God's sake, no pity.'

CHAPTER II

I CAN only describe the life which was lived by Angelique Dodsworth, after she received Gustave Maynard's letter of renunciation, as a martyrdom.

The contents of the letter could not long be kept from her Mother's knowledge—that was a matter of course. Mrs. Dodsworth was a good woman of a peculiar aggravating type. That is to say, she was a woman of unblemished virtue. Possibly she had never had any temptation to be other than virtuous, for she had married while very young, and her husband was an easy-going kind of man, who was capable upon occasion of feeling and showing the most furious jealousy. And, like many other easy-going persons, he was also capable of the most outrageous transports of rage. There were times when he could be thrown into perfect avalanches of passion; and in course of time his wife had learned so accurately to gauge his mental conditions, that she could by a word or two effectually put him out of conceit with any one. This little trait was

one which she found most useful in her dealings with her children, and it was also one of which she never scrupled to make the fullest use in the furtherance of her own ends.

One of the most curious sides of Mrs. Dodsworth's remarkable and exceedingly complex character was that she invariably overestimated the value and importance of even the most trifling incident which concerned herself. She always spoke of herself as a good woman sorely tried! I have said that she was virtuous—no doubt ever was or ever had been raised on that point—but in her virtue had to stand sponsor for a great deal. Of the minor virtues, such as are instinct with many women, she knew absolutely nothing. She did not understand that it is a greater kindness to leave an open wound unprobed than it is to offer bread to the hungry. She loved to talk things over, to look at them from this point and from that, to explain them as they appeared to be from her particular standpoint; and having wearied her hearer into a jaded acquiescence, it was her joy to then turn right about, march round until she reached an exactly opposite coign of vantage, when she would mentally plant herself down and explain the entire situation to her own extreme satisfaction, so as to make the new stand-point fit joint by

joint with the old one. It was an exhaustive process for the audience; and in such a case as that of Angelique's broken love affair, it was one fraught with living agony to the one who was obliged to listen. For there was no getting away from Mrs. Dodsworth. As easily might the wedding guest have got away from the Ancient Mariner as a luckless fly get out of the web of Mrs. Dodsworth's complicated converse.

'Will it *never* stop?' Angelique cried desperately to Gwyn one morning when Gustave Maynard's letter was a three-days'-old wonder. 'Is she going on for ever?'

'My poor Angel!' murmured Gwyn pityingly.

'She wonders how he could have the effrontery to treat a daughter of *hers* like that!' Angelique went on derisively. 'It is a far more weighty matter to Mother that he has dared to treat *her* daughter ill than that he has broken my heart. What's the good of ragging it over and over? Cannot she see that it hurts, hurts *here*?' laying her hand on her heart and looking at Gwyn with great, grey, wide-open eyes.

'My dear, my dear, Mother doesn't mean to be unkind. She could not,' Gwyn cried. 'If only she would not talk, or would talk to me of it!'

'If we could only get away,' Angelique cried. 'Oh! Gwyn, cannot you help me to get away?

Cannot you tell Father how miserable I am, here where every one knows us, knows all about Gustave, knows that he has—has jilted me? He surely will understand how Mother worries me, how she churns it over and over till I could shriek aloud for sheer nervousness lest she is going to begin it all over again? Daddy is good-natured and kind — surely he will give me a chance of getting away from any more torture.'

'I'll ask him. I'll take the very first chance,' said Gwyn soothingly. 'But I must find a chance first. I can't rush it on him. Hush—is that Mother coming back again?'

'Yes—yes—I'm off. I can't hear it all over again to-day,' Angelique cried.

She smiled at Gwyn and bolted out of the room by a door opposite to the one which Mrs. Dodsworth was even then approaching. Gwyn thought of the smile with a shudder. What is there so sad as a smile which is only tears frozen hard?

'Where is Angelique?' asked the mother as she came into the room.

'Angelique? She was here a few minutes ago,' Gwyn replied. 'I don't know where she went.'

Mrs. Dodsworth turned back again and carefully closed the door. Then she settled herself

down by the fire just opposite to Gwyn, arranged her spectacles to a nicety at the right angle of her nose, and spread out a voluminous garment of white calico which was in process of fashioning.

'The white hen has laid an egg to-day,' she remarked casually; 'the little white hen with the feathery legs.'

'You don't say so,' returned Gwyn, feigning an interest which she was very far from feeling.

'Yes, I did not expect her to lay much before Christmas,' said Mrs. Dodsworth cheerfully.

'I'm sure it is very considerate of her,' said Gwyn.

'Yes—yes—it is. Ah! if everything else was as smooth and easy as the henyard, we should do very well,' Mrs. Dodsworth remarked, her tone changing. 'Do you know, Gwyn, I *cannot* make out this affair at all. I don't seem to be able to get at the rights of it.'

'Oh! dear Mother,' cried Gwyn impatiently, 'the rights are easy enough to get at. He has no money, and Angelique has no money, and he has thrown her over for somebody who has—that's all.'

'But for *my* daughter to be thrown over—it's such an insult to me.'

'I don't suppose he thought of that,' put in Gwyn sarcastically.

'But *I* think of it. I'm sure we ought not to let it pass. Father ought to take it up.'

'Taking it up won't unmarry him or make him a true lover to Angelique,' said Gwyn, with quick decision. 'You could not possibly get Father to take him to task. He has chosen to throw Angelique over; it is not for any of us to make him think that she or we regret him.'

'But does Angelique regret him? She won't talk about him, not even to me. Just Yes and No, and that's all the answer I get. Most girls would like to confide in their mother, to talk it over, to decide what to do. But everything is kept from me—it is always the same.'

'Dear Mother,' cried Gwyn, 'it is not so. The child is knocked over altogether by this blow. It *is* a blow—she loved him. It was quite unexpected. Give her time to breathe again. She wants to talk to no one, to confide in no one. She wants to be left alone, to get over it, as an animal gets into covert and gets over its wounds —or—dies.'

'Angelique won't die,' said Mrs. Dodsworth, in no wise moved by the entreaty and tenderness in Gwyn's voice. 'In a few weeks' time she will be gadding about as jauntily as ever.'

'She would like to go away,' began Gwyn.

'Away—where?'

'To London. She would like to do something —to work—to try to forget. It is so difficult to forget in a place where everybody knows.'

'It is difficult to forget one's troubles anywhere, as I know from experience,' said Mrs. Dodsworth with a prodigious sigh. 'As for work, bless me! there's work enough here and to spare. I got all that linen for new sheets and pillow slips. It must all be drawn and feather-stitched——'

'Not work of that kind,' cried Gwyn, in despair of ever getting the subject broached.

'What kind of work then?' demanded her mother.

'Well—more serious work. Art work, or black and white, drawing black-and-white pictures for illustrations, you know. Or she might take up music or go on the stage.'

Mrs. Torville uttered the last four words in a voice scarcely above a whisper; but Mrs. Dodsworth, though at times she was most conveniently deaf, heard them distinctly.

'On the stage! a daughter of mine go on the stage!' she cried, in loud, astonished accents. 'Why, Gwyn, what nonsense have you been putting in Angelique's head?'

'I have not put the idea in her head, Mother,' said Gwyn quietly. 'Angelique is young and ambitious. All young girls, who have a soul

above waiting till some man condescends to marry them, have ambitions, and long to be of use in the world.'

'Of use! I never found that Angelique longed to be of use,' Mrs. Dodsworth cried. 'When did that craze come in, pray?'

'She has always longed to go out into the world—to work—to cut out a career for herself,' answered Gwyn steadily.

'To get away from the restraints of home, you mean,' returned the mother drily. 'I know what that means. Why should my daughter not be satisfied to stay at home in comfort like other girls? I always was.'

'You married at seventeen, Mother,' said Gwyn, smiling; 'Angelique is four-and-twenty.'

'Well, and whose fault is that? Not mine. I knew what it would be when she was first engaged to Gustave Maynard. I said to her months before that even—"Angelique, you will go through the wood and through the wood, and you'll pick up a crooked stick at last."'

'And, poor child, she hasn't picked up a stick of any kind,' said Gwyn pitifully. 'Still, I do think, Mother, if you could make up your mind to let her try her wings for a time, say for six months or a year, you would not regret it. I would go with her, and we would share out

together. You would be satisfied that she was being taken care of. If she succeeded, you would be proud, and she would be happy and satisfied; and if she failed, why, she would be glad to come home to the old nest, and she would appreciate it more than she had ever done before.'

'But what chance will she have up there of marrying and settling?' Mrs. Dodsworth asked anxiously.

'Dear Mother,' said Gwyn, 'Madge's marriage and mine have not been so successful that you need regret that chance for her. She met Gustave here. I think she might do better in a new circle.'

'I don't know but that you are right,' Mrs. Dodsworth admitted.

Gwyn knew that the day was won, and pressed the question no further. She carried the news of her triumph to Angelique, whom she found in her bedroom busily engaged in turning out all Gustave's presents and letters.

'I shall not want these now,' she said, turning her sad eyes upon Gwyn. 'There's nothing of any value excepting my ring. I shall send that back by post; all the rest I shall put in the fire. I want to take nothing of the old life into the new.'

'Don't burn your boats too completely,' said Gwyn.

'Why not? I can never go back now; there's no room for me in the past. I must get on—get on—and forget that there were ever boats to cross in.'

'I think I have paved the way,' Gwyn said, sitting down on the little stool which stood beside the fender.

'Not really? With Daddy?'

'No—with Mother. I felt it was best to enlist her if I could. She has such power over Father, and can make such a difference to everything. I think it is all right.'

'And she did not take fright at the stage?' Angelique exclaimed.

'Well, she did, rather. But I am sure she sees how hard it would be for you to stay here where everybody knows or will know all about it. And I suggested to her that if you had a fair try at hard work for a year or even six months, and *failed*—that you would be willing to come home again.'

'Gwyn, you're a wonderful woman,' Angelique cried, her eyes beginning to blaze. 'I shall owe you a good turn for this all my life as long as I live. Fail! Fail, did you say? Oh! only let me once get a chance, and you see whether I fail.

Fail!—I tell you there is no such word in my vocabulary.'

'But you must go softly over the stones,' said Gwyn, smiling in her tender way.

'Yes, yes, old Safety-Valve, I'll keep that in mind,' Angelique cried.

She was almost gay, almost her old enthusiastic self. She discussed the prospect from this side and that, laid plans, arranged all manner of little details in a way which carried even Gwyn along with her. Gwyn had sucked the orange of life, and had found very early that it was a bitter one, and none too good at that. Yet even she was not proof against the fascination of the vivid pictures of time to come that slipped from Angelique's persuasive and eloquent tongue. She thought that the prospect of change and rest from the tediousness of home had already dulled the sharp edge of the bitter humiliation which had just fallen upon her, and she was glad.

But it was not so. Left alone by the fire, Angelique sank down in a despondent heap in front of the warm glow. 'If I fail,' she muttered. 'Yes, but I won't fail. I can't fail. I dare not fail with a prospect of Beech Croft for ever before me. Yet—if I do, what then? I will never come home again—I would infinitely rather—*die!*'

CHAPTER III

If I were to tell in detail the whole story of how Angelique Dodsworth, aided by Gwyn, was able to dazzle her mother with the advantages of letting her leave Beech Croft that she might try her wings in a bolder flight than she had as yet ever taken, I should exhaust the patience of my reader long before I got to the story which I have to tell; indeed, it is more than doubtful if I should ever get to the legitimate part of my story at all. Suffice it to say that it was a process, a most exhaustive one. Mrs. Dodsworth viewed the project from this point and that, retailed at length her own personal feelings at the discovery that a child of hers was desirous of going on the stage, and finally expressed a somewhat roundabout opinion that the advantages would be all on one side—that of the stage, of course—and that Angelique had only to let it be known that she was available to immediately find every manager in London at her feet.

'I believe,' said Angelique in a fit of im-

patience to Gwyn, 'that Mother has a fond idea that being a daughter of hers is a more than sufficient training for me to be able to jump to the top of the tree in one bound. She doesn't seem to realise that I have to be taught all sorts of things before I shall be worth my salt. Daddy is much more reasonable; he accepts it at once as a proper thing that I shall have to study elocution, stage-dancing, and deportment. I believe Mother thinks if she would only condescend to do it, that she could go straight on to the boards herself, and cut everybody out without the smallest trouble. But, really, one has to be taught how to walk across the stage.'

'I suppose you have,' said Gwyn. She had never been cursed with a hankering after the footlights. 'I should have thought, though, that it would have been the surest way for you to take quite a small part and work up gradually.'

'Not a bit of it,' returned Angelique decidedly, 'that's the old-fashioned idea, and has exploded long ago. Nowadays nobody drudges. You go to a first-class trainer and get taught everything in three months. Everything else depends on luck and your own power of pushing yourself forward at the right moment. I got to know a lot about that the last time Mother and I stayed at Derrick's.'

Gwyn did not dispute the fact; and as she knew little or nothing about stage-land, she took Angelique's remarks very much for granted. It also sounded plausible and reasonable enough, and Angelique seemed to take a common-sense, everyday view of the situation, and in no way to be dazzled by the ease and glory of the life which lay before her.

Finally, Mr. Dodsworth agreed to allow four pounds a week for not longer than a year, this to be controlled by Gwyn, and together with her little income (she had something over a hundred and sixty pounds a year of her own) was to cover all their expenses.

'It won't give you anything to play with,' he said, when Angelique had enthusiastically expressed her thanks to him for what she called his great generosity. 'No, you needn't thank me any more at all. I don't like your scheme; I hate the idea of your going play-acting; I'd greatly prefer you to stay at home quietly, and be satisfied with your natural condition, until you got a home of your own, like all the women of our family that have gone before you. But you've had a knock-down blow, and your mother and I both would rather sacrifice our own inclinations than keep you here fretting your head out—so you shall go.'

'Dear Dad,' murmured Angelique.

'Yes, yes, I've always tried to be that to you, and your mother, too. Never forget she's been a good mother to you all, and put herself about times and times when some mothers would have let things slide anyhow. And keep it in mind, little lass, that the two old people at home will break their hearts if anything comes amiss to you. Keep in mind that you've left the old nest against their natural wishes, and try to make them proud of you and glad that they gave way to your ambitions.'

'I will, Daddy, I will,' cried Angelique. 'And, Daddy, you'll believe one thing—I'm not going away for fun and to frivol, I'm going to work, first to show you and Mother that there *is* something in me, and then—to show some one else.' She uttered the last word in a very low tone, almost under her breath indeed; but John Dodsworth, though in an ordinary way a man of anything but acute perceptions in small matters pertaining to women, heard them, and nodded his head in sign of understanding.

'Ah! well, my little girl, times come and times go, and may be some day you'll look back to this bitter day and be able to say it was all for the best. God grant it, anyway.'

'Father seems so plain and rough and common-

place,' said Angelique later on to her sister, 'but he understands better than Mother, for all she professes to be so sensitive and so tender-hearted. *He* knows without telling just what it is to me to be here where every one knows. Oh! Gwyn, Gwyn, what do you think Mrs. Williams said to me yesterday?'

'How should I know?' returned Gwyn. 'She's an inveterate gossip and a thoroughly coarse-minded woman, so it was something horrid, I'm sure.'

'Well, she asked me if it was true that my engagement to Gustave was over—"off," she called it. And I, of course, could not possibly deny it, could not shut her up or anything, so I just had to say Yes, and try to look as unconcerned as I could. And then she said in her horrid, croaking way: "Ah! *I* never thought it would come to anything. You can always tell whether a man is serious or not. By the way, did he send you a portrait of the lady he jilted you for, my dear?"'

'Angel!' cried Gwyn in a pitiful voice.

'Yes; she said just that, and in just that way,' said Angelique, looking at Gwyn with her wide-open, tearless eyes. 'For a moment I felt perfectly stunned, and then I pulled myself together a bit, and I looked at her straight. "I've heard

of some fairly nasty things that you have said before, Mrs. Williams," I said, "but I do think this time you've outshone yourself." '

'And she said——?' asked Gwyn.

'Said—what do you expect she would say? That she hoped she hadn't hurt my feelings?' said Angelique bitterly. 'Surely you know Mrs. Williams better than that! No, she gave a sniff, and said that she had no doubt I felt my position keenly, and that she hoped all my friends would be like her, and make allowances for me. And then Mother came peering in, and I left them hard at it, so by this time all the parish knows everything that there is to know.'

'You will soon be out of it, darling,' said Gwyn soothingly.

'Oh! yes, yes, and if ever I come home to Beech Croft for more than a short visit, may I——'

'Don't, don't say what you would do. You are going out into the world to make a great success,' Gwyn cried.

'And if I don't make it, I hope I may die,' Angelique rejoined passionately.

Three days later the sisters turned their backs upon Beech Croft, as Angelique audibly hoped, for ever. She was quite radiant with enthusiasm and expectation as the train slid out of the little

country station. 'Good-bye, good-bye, stupid, dull old place. We have seen the last of you as anything more than an episode. Good-bye, good-bye.'

She leaned out of the window to get a last look at the father and mother still standing on the platform; and Mrs. Dodsworth, who was a woman easily moved to tears when she thought them suitable to the occasion, clutched hard hold of her husband's arm, and her large, mindless face underwent an envious series of contortions and changings of colour.

'John,' she said in an odd, choking voice, 'my mind misgives me when I think of a child of mine going on the stage.'

'Nay, Mother,' returned John Dodsworth, still waving heartily after the departing train, 'it's too late to think of that now; you should have spoken earlier. Come now, don't keep Jinny waiting.'

Angelique, still at the carriage window, could just see the comfortable family waggonette and the very matronly-looking Jinny standing at the station entrance. 'Good-bye to the old tub and the cow-like Jinny,' she cried gaily, as she drew in her head and subsided on to the seat; 'we are going into the world of wonder and hansom cabs.'

'We are going into the world of buses and shanks's nags,' corrected Gwyn, though it went to her heart to in any way daunt the brilliant hopes and radiant spirits of the breathless girl opposite to her. Then she gave voice to a thought which suddenly arose in her mind. 'You are very pretty, Angel,' she said, her eyes lingering over the fresh beauties of her sister's face. 'I like you with your soft hair all blown about and your great eyes shining like stars. I wonder if you will look as well on the stage as you do off?'

'I ought to look better. I shall have all the advantages of make-up,' answered Angelique.

'But you lose your own wild-rose complexion,' said Gwyn.

'No, no, it will come out all the fresher for its temporary eclipses,' said Angelique wisely. 'Oh! I think I ought to look all right—my figure is good and my waist so small. And I've good eyebrows and good hair, too. And then my legs are a perfect dream.'

Gwyn felt herself growing a little faint. 'Your *legs*' Angel, she cried. 'But what have your legs to do with it?'

Angelique laughed. 'Why, my dear, I could not go on the stage without legs, could I? And if they were knock-kneed or bandy, I should be almost as badly off.'

But she felt in her heart that she had made a slip, and that she would guard her tongue so as not to shock Gwyn before they were safely launched on their new life. So instead of chatting idly any more, she opened the book she had brought to read on the way, and began to study it diligently. It was a little brown book with a shabby cover. Mrs. Torville smiled as she recognised it, for it had been but seldom out of Angelique's hands during the past few weeks. It was an acting edition of *As You Like It*, and very soon the girl was away in the 'Forest of Arden,' no longer Angelique, but Shakespeare's Rosalind.

'She is very handsome, intensely attractive,' Gwyn's thoughts ran. 'If only she does not get tired, if only she can get through the drudgery, she will do.'

As soon as they got to London they went straight to Derrick's, a private hotel in Bloomsbury, where various members of the Dodsworth family had from time to time sojourned for many years past. They had quite a free hand to make the best arrangements they could.

'I should be inclined to say stay at Derrick's if they are willing to give you good terms,' Mrs. Dodsworth had said, as a final instruction to Gwyn. 'We know the Derricks, and they know us, and they are extremely respectable people.

I am quite sure that the mere fact of your being *my* daughters will be enough to make them show you every attention.'

'I will do the best I can, Mother,' said Gwyn; 'of course, we cannot have a private sitting-room at Derrick's, and Angelique may find that an absolute necessity when she is studying hard.'

'Well, you will see, only don't give way too completely to Angelique's whims and caprices. You know what she is, Gwyn. The firmer hand you keep over Angelique, the better for her.'

During the few weeks prior to the departure of the sisters from Beech Croft, Gwyn was made the recipient of many similar pieces of advice. Now all these sayings Gwyn Torville kept, like Mary, in her heart. She knew quite well that if she disclosed them to Angelique, the girl would go dead against them even were they such as the poorest intellect would see the wisdom of. So Gwyn kept them to herself, and only brought them forth as chance and occasion needed.

As soon as they reached their bedroom at Derrick's, Angelique looked round in a dissatisfied kind of way. 'I don't think I ever saw Derrick's look so dingy,' she remarked rather disdainfully. 'I don't believe this room has been cleaned since the last person or persons left it. Ugh! It smells.'

Mrs. Torville sat down on the nearest chair with a feeling akin to despair! Of a surety, Angelique was soon finding the crumpled rose-leaf in her new existence.

'Don't you think any London room would seem the same to us just fresh from the country without lavender-scented sheets and our fresh dimity hangings?'

'Yes, Gwyn, yes, I'm an unreasonable beast,' cried Angelique in vigorous self-denunciation. 'Forgive me, I'm not myself yet, and perhaps I am just a little appalled by the great wide world that lies before me. I've been so long thinking of the future, the real future, as a sheltered haven that—that—oh, Gwyn, I haven't got over it yet.'

She dropped down like a shot bird at Mrs. Torville's feet and hid her face against her knee. Gwyn laid her hand upon the girl's head, smoothing gently the wealth of radiant hair, in whose brown the sunbeams seemed to have lost themselves. 'My Angel, I know—I know. But, after all, it is a bright future that lies before us, a future with endless possibilities to be won if we fight hard enough. You must be brave, Angel, and not faint upon the very threshold. You have to conquer—or——'

'Or die,' ended Angelique, in a tone of deter-

mination, and with a gesture of indomitable pride.

She raised herself from her lowly position and knelt at her sister's feet with the smile on her face again.

'Old Safety-Valve,' she said softly, 'I am afraid you will have but a poor sort of time until I am fairly launched, ay, and afterwards for that matter. What should I do without you? What would be the end of me? How should I ever get through the ruck? Gwyn, Gwyn, you say your prayers still; I've never said mine since I got that last letter. I couldn't—it would be a mockery, a sacrilege—but you pray still. Pray for me that I may find forgetfulness in my work.'

And then she set her sister's hands free and went to the window, where she stood looking out over the soiled white muslin blind across the dingy London square. A bit of poetry came to Gwyn's mind as she watched her—

> 'God pity them both! and pity us all,
> Who vainly the dreams of youth recall.
> For of all sad words of tongue or pen,
> The saddest are these: "It might have been!"'

CHAPTER IV

THE ladies and gentlemen who made their home either permanently or temporarily at Derrick's were more interested in Angelique Dodsworth than in all the rest of the household put together. The ladies called her a charming young creature, and the men said she was ripping! In less than a week everybody knew almost her whole story, everything, indeed, excepting that part which concerned Gustave Maynard, and that other part which concerned Angelique's sentiments as to the curious complexity of her mother's character. On those two subjects she was discretion itself, for she was not like her mother in respect of not being able to keep certain things to herself. The mother and daughter were strangely like, and equally strangely unlike each other. Under any circumstances Mrs. Dodsworth was bound to talk. The topic was immaterial; it was generally the latest interest which had chanced to come into her life. For instance, the subject of Angelique's broken engagement served day and night as a

subject of the most elaborate and detailed conversation and conjecture, such as might have been justly compared to a silver-point for minuteness of detail. But no sooner did some new interest arise, or quite possibly an interest as old as the hills, but coming newly into her life, than her mind seemed to be switched off the old topic and turned with full force on to the new one. The new interest in this case was the fact that her second daughter, Madge, had come home unexpectedly with two of her children—had come with looks so wan and white that her mother more than suspected, though Madge would rather have died than have owned to it, that the absent husband, Frank Morrison, was in the habit not only of neglecting, but of systematically ill-treating her.

Now Angelique was like and yet unlike this. Talk she must, and talk of the latest interest which had happened to come into her life, but she had not the fatal habit which she was accustomed to speak of as 'ragging.' She was enthusiastic, eloquent to an alarming degree, and possessed of an intense desire to shine in the eyes of all the people she met, no matter what their age, sex, or condition. So she quickly made friends with all the inmates of Derrick's, and as quickly acquainted them with all her

ideas, plans and ambitions. Everybody gave her advice, most of it admirable, if not always practicable, and at first Mrs. Torville trembled lest she might be inclined to follow too many paths to glory, only to find that they led to failure. But Gwyn found that there was an Angelique in that lissom body which was all unknown to her. She soon found that there was an Angelique who was determined to go her own sweet way, and no one else's, to follow the dictates of her own firm will in fine indifference to the teachings of common sense or to the experience of others.

'Study with Henry Merriman,' she heard her say one evening to a young man of Jewish appearance who happened to sit next to her at dinner. 'Oh! no, no one goes to Henry Merriman nowadays. His vogue is over long ago, his style is so old fashioned, so tiresome. I am going to Le Brun for dramatic teaching, to St. Aubert for stage dancing, and to Aubière for singing. They are the very best people living. No one has a chance with any one else.'

'And when you are through?' said the Jewish young man, who was very much interested in Angelique.

'When I am through! Oh! then my position is assured. You see, none of these people will

take a pupil unless she is worth teaching. The very fact of my being a pupil of these three will be enough for any manager in London.'

'I think I have heard of a pupil of Le Brun's who died in a garret,' remarked Israel Isaacs mildly.

'Ah! I daresay. Possibly she was too good—too much of the romantic school,' said Angelique lightly. 'That never pays. The day has gone by for everything but domestic comedy. The romantic school is at a discount.'

'And about the old comedies?' Israel Isaacs asked.

'What, the costume plays—"School for Scandal," "Stoops to Conquer," and all those? Oh, they are all as antiquated and out of date as you please. Of course, every actress has to begin by playing "Maria," and hopes some day to play Lady Teazle. But that is not my ambition. No, a good part in a modern play, and the credit of creating a character—that's the kind of thing I am looking forward to.'

'It will surely come,' said Israel Isaacs, with a flash of his orient eyes.

'I only want my chance,' said Angelique confidently.

'And you will get that.'

'Oh yes. I could have that at any time, but

I don't want to rush things. You see, there is such a lot of interest to be worked up before a girl has the smallest chance of success. One must get well talked about, paragraphed, noticed. I am working at that already. Only yesterday Le Brun took an opportunity of introducing me to the editor of the *Evening Twinkle.*

'M'Allister,' said Israel.

'No, that was not his name. Pooke, I think it was.'

'Pooke? Oh, that's the sub-editor. However, that's all the same to you. Pooke can do you many a good turn if he likes,' said Israel.

'Le Brun introduced him as the editor,' said Angelique, sticking resolutely to her point.

'I daresay. That's her artfulness, you know. Oh! Le Brun's an old stager up to every move in the game. By the way, have you seen her in this new piece?'

'Not yet. She never seems to have any seats to give away, though I think she might to her own pupils,' replied Angelique indignantly.

'I shall be delighted to take you, if you will honour me with your company,' said Israel Isaacs gallantly.

For a moment Angelique felt her whole soul rise up in revolt against the possibility of such a proposal being carried into effect. A remem-

brance of Gustave Maynard, with his smooth, courtly manners, his well-bred air, and his deferential way, deferential yet very imperious, rose up before her. She—Angelique Dodsworth—to go to a theatre alone with this little Whitechapel Jew, this little black-visaged creature whose crown did not reach to her ear. Oh! it was preposterous, impossible. Then came second thoughts—always best they say. Gustave was no longer hers, but another's; Gustave was deferring to and hectoring over somebody else now; Gustave was nothing to her now, and she must make the best of such chances as she had. Like a flash of lightning came a conviction that, after all, he evidently knew something of press land and press people; he was rich, or at least well off, for he had a private sitting-room, and went away and came home in a cab every day of his life; and hideous and common as he was, he might make himself useful in a thousand ways to her. Therefore, she turned to him in her most gracious manner and with her most winning smile, saying that it was immensely good of him to think of her, and that she would love to go to the Royal with him any evening that he liked.

'Shall we say to-morrow?' said he, who, with the instinct of his race, was anxious to clinch the engagement as soon as he could.

'Yes; I don't think we are doing anything to-morrow,' said Angelique. She knew that they had not the faintest ghost of an engagement for the following evening, but it was part of her policy to invariably assume that she and Gwyn were greatly in request.

For a moment Israel Isaacs was tempted to say that he had meant the invitation for her alone. Then he remembered that Mrs. Torville was a stylish looking woman, who would do him great credit if there chanced to be any one in the Royal who knew him, and also that it was better to break the ice gently, so as not to startle Angelique too much by her first plunge into Bohemia. Israel Isaacs might have spared himself this concession to fashion, for Angelique was ready to become a Bohemian of Bohemia, and had no intention of being startled at anything. She broke the news to Gwyn later on. Gwyn's face clouded.

'Go to the theatre with that—that little Jew,' she exclaimed with a gasp. 'Oh! my dear Angel, you didn't promise, surely?'

'Well—I did,' said Angel, a little blankly.

'But if any one we know sees us,' cried Gwyn.

'Oh! how silly! As if they would. Besides, if they do, any one from home will be in the dress circle, and we shall be in the stalls. They won't

sniff at us. And, Gwyn, this little Jew man has heaps of press influence; he can do no end for me; and he is willing to help me. We've not got so much time or money that I can afford to lose a single chance.'

'No, no, dear. I would not stand in your way for all the world—only—only—it seems so—so—preposterous *you* being taken about by such a man as that, particularly after—after such men as you have been used to.'

'You mean Gustave,' said Angelique in a hard, grating tone. 'You needn't mind saying it, Gwyn. I *feel* it always.'

'My poor Angel!' said Gwyn, in a perfect agony of self-reproach. 'You know I would not say anything to hurt you for the whole world. If it pleases you to go with this Mr. Isaacs, why of course we will.'

So they went. Angelique wore a simple black evening frock, and looked charming. And Israel Isaacs sat between the two distinguished-looking sisters, and positively swelled with pride. He was lavish too. Their seats were in the second row of stalls; he gave them coffee and ices, and tipped the smart white-capped attendant handsomely. They were quite the best waited on people in the theatre.

'She's a queer old girl,' said Israel Isaacs, as

Miss Le Brun swept off the stage, 'but I always enjoy seeing her. Her style's good.'

'I thought she might have made that point about the society woman much better,' said Angelique, staring at the stage in a hard, critical way.

'Le Brun never over-makes her points,' said Israel.

'No, she under-values them,' said Angelique.

Mrs. Torville opened her eyes widely. Surely, if Angel was already able to pick holes in her teacher—but there, that was Angelique all over. She was always able to show her elders how things should be done; in that, Angelique was only true to herself.

'She didn't make enough of it; she doesn't squeeze half enough out of the part. I'm disappointed in her,' Angelique went on. 'I used to think her such a great actress, artist to her finger-tips, but now that I know her inside out, so to speak, I can see the joints in her harness almost without looking for them.'

'And when you come out, Miss Angelique,' said Israel with a meaning leer, 'then——?'

'When *I* come out,' said Angelique, taking the words out of his mouth, 'I am going to act—act —ACT every night of my life. That woman is walking through her part. She gives out all her

vitality bullying us in the mornings. She is used up by the time night comes. Oh! you don't know what it is for me to sit tamely here with every fibre of my being palpitating to be on the boards, to see all these people making so little of their opportunities, while Le Brun does not even trouble to act, but relies solely on her name.'

'But she had to make the name,' suggested Gwyn.

'Oh! that's often done by accident,' returned Angelique promptly.

'Let us hope that such an accident may happen to you, Miss Angelique,' said Israel effusively.

'If I only get my chance,' said Angelique feverishly, as the curtain went up.

That was always the burden of her cry—if she could only get the chance, if she could only have a show, a real show.

'Angel, you really ought to wait Miss Le Brun's time, and she does not think you ready,' said Gwyn, when more than six months had gone by.

'Le Brun—pooh! What does Le Brun care about my getting on so long as she gets her fees?' cried Angelique scornfully. 'Le Brun's one idea of getting me ready is to make me go over half a dozen parts till I know them by heart, till I am something more than word perfect.

Who could play Lady Teazle to the Sir Peter of a Le Brun? Who could play the Lady of Lyons to such a Claude Melnotte? And what does she do to help me? She gives me advice, she says it's no use beginning at the top and climbing down to the bottom, that I ought to go for two or three years on tour with a good all-round stock company. Such rubbish! And begin with Maria and the chambermaids' parts! Anything else? It's my belief that Le Brun is just as jealous as ever she can be.'

'Jealous!' echoed Gwyn, 'but you don't play the same kind of parts.'

'No, of course not, but she knows I can cut her out at anything if I only get a chance. You've no idea, you dear old Safety-Valve; how much wire-pulling and dirty work there is to do before one can make the smallest headway. One has to lick the very dust before one gets a show, and then I suppose one will be exactly like all the others, and carefully kick down all those who are struggling up the ladder behind one.'

'It seems very low and mean,' cried Gwyn indignantly.

'Yes, but life is low and mean and too sordid for words,' said Angelique. 'Come in?' she added, in a different tone, as a knock sounded on the door.

It was opened an inch or so, and a man's voice without said, 'A box for Miss Dodsworth.'

'Angelique jumped up. 'Oh! is it you, Joseph?' she exclaimed. 'Ah! I'm glad that has come. Thank you for bringing it up at once.'

'Angel, what's that?' asked Gwyn, as Angelique shut the door again.

'It's my frock from Wavertree's,' said Angelique carelessly.

'What frock? Not a new one?' cried Gwyn.

'Yes, didn't I tell you? Dear old Gwyn, it slipped my memory. I had to have a decent frock to go round seeing managers and people in. It's no earthly use going in a shabby gown, they won't look at you. This is quite a simple little frock—a plain tweed.'

'And it costs, how much?' asked Gwyn nervously.

'Oh! very little. You needn't worry about it,' replied Angelique carelessly, as she took off the lid. 'There, now, isn't that pretty? Quite plain and simple, as you see.'

'But how soon will it have to be paid for?' Gwyn persisted. 'Because, you know, Angel, I have no money to spare—your cabs and odds and ends run away with so much! And if the bill goes in to Father—well, I don't suppose he would mind, but he would certainly tell Mother,

and we—you—I—would never hear the last of it.'

'The bill won't go in to Father,' said Angelique, with a laugh. 'I've arranged all that. Wavertrees are quite prepared to wait my time for payment.'

'And how much was it?'

'Oh! not much,' replied Angelique, deftly crushing the bill which lay at the bottom of the box in her hand, 'about seven or eight guineas. I arranged it all for seven guineas, and then they suggested that the touch of braiding here and there would improve it vastly, and they promised to keep it as low as they could. Why, dear old Safety-Valve, are you pulling such a long face? It's not ruination.'

'I was thinking of the other gowns and things you haven't paid for,' said Gwyn soberly. 'You know, Angelique, if you don't make this hit, we shall have to go home again; and if there are debts, life won't be worth living.'

'I would rather die,' said Angelique solemnly. 'I shall never go home again to live, Gwyn, never.'

'But if our resources come to an end?' said Gwyn.

'Oh! they won't do that. Why should they? To-morrow I shall paint my face and tire my head, and clad in my new Wavertree gown, I

shall sally forth to try the effect of my charms on the managers I haven't seen yet. You would never believe the effect of a gown on a man, Gwyn; you see, everything goes for effect on the stage, and appearance counts for so much. Wait till the next few days are over, and then see if you don't admit that I was right to don sword and buckler for the fray.'

She had slipped into the new gown, and was turning herself slowly round and round before the glass door of the wardrobe.

'Virette is doing me a little hat to match it,' she said carelessly.

'Angel!' cried Gwyn.

'Oh! dear, dear, are you at it again? You are getting almost as tiresome as Mother! I tell you I must have things to wear. Goodness knows, I do with little enough! By the way, didn't you have a letter from Mother this afternoon?'

'Yes.'

'I suppose they're all right at home?' with conventional indifference.

'Madge is going to have another baby,' said Gwyn.

'Bless me!' cried Angelique, 'what does she do it for? Surely she has children enough? And he such a brute as he is. I can't think how Madge stands it.'

'Madge never complains. Madge is very fond of him,' said Gwyn.

'Is she? Hum—the less said about that the better, *I* say. I've seen Madge look—oh! well, it 's her business. She is four years older than I, and must manage her own affairs and have her babies as she likes. We have enough to do to think out our own affairs properly. Listen, Gwyn, I have got a letter of introduction to Irving, and another to Wyndham, and to several other influential people. I shall go to Irving first.'

'But your line is light comedy,' cried Gwyn.

'That doesn't matter. I shall fit my line to my parts. All I want is a chance.'

CHAPTER V

A GREAT many young women go to London from the provinces yearning to go on the stage, and full of a deep-rooted notion that the streets are paved with gold, and that fame and wealth are to be gathered as easy as dog-roses from a country hedgerow. It needs but a very short time to teach such that they are mistaken, and they usually go home to their native heath deeply impressed with a belief that no *good* girl has the very smallest chance of getting a footing or a hearing. There are thousands of these stage-struck maidens always on hand, eagerly jostling one another in the race for a place. They have mostly burst the cut-and-dried bonds of their home-life; they have mostly but little money with which to grease the wheels of their dramatic chariot, and what little they have, they usually let slip into the hands of teachers and agents as unscrupulous as they are incapable of rendering any real services to their clients; and all these budding Juliets are, for the most part,

quite unfitted for the parts they are so eager to play.

Angelique went all round. She procured letters to every manager of note, but without the very smallest success. Each one was overstocked; each one had long lists of clever and handsome girls anxiously waiting for a chance of a vacancy; each one told her that her only possible chance of making any mark in London was to give a matinée and to ask all the managers to go to see what she could do, what sort of stuff she was made of.

'I see,' said Angelique, almost in despair to Gwyn, 'that it 's the only chance I have. Surely that horrid old Le Brun might have told me it was the best way instead of stuffing me up with an idea that she could get me an engagement, and then wanting me to go on tour for years and years.'

'But what will a matinée cost?' Gwyn asked.

'Oh! a pretty good lot—two hundred at least,' Angelique answered carelessly.

Gwyn almost screamed. 'My dear Angel, it 's out of the question. We haven't two hundred pence to spare! Why should it cost so much for a single performance?'

'Well, we couldn't have it in a mangy little theatre,' Angelique explained. 'In that case the

best people wouldn't come. Then, of course, one would have to have a good company to support one properly. It's the greatest mistake in the world to try to show oneself off in bad surroundings. Have the best theatre and the best people you can possibly get, and then you have a chance of doing yourself justice. I shall have Wilmot if I can get him.'

'But who is going to pay for it?' cried Gwyn.

'Oh! that's easily managed. I shall try for the Haymarket.'

'The Haymarket Theatre?' exclaimed Gwyn aghast.

'Oh yes. I daresay it won't be easy, but it's no use spoiling the ship for a ha'pny-worth of tar,' Angelique replied.

'But where is the money to come from?' Gwyn cried.

Angelique crossed from the fireside and sat down beside her. 'Gwyn,' she said, 'I'm not going to ask Father to pay for it. No, dear old Safety-Valve, I know a better way than that. Israel Isaacs——'

'*Angel!*' cried Gwyn indignantly. 'You cannot take money, money from that little Jew.'

'Of course not. Who said anything about money? I am going to provide my own dresses. But the rest—well, he is well off, rich really, very

keen on the stage, very keen on—on—making me Mrs. Israel Isaacs, and I don't see why I shouldn't make use of him—he being more than willing to be made use of.'

'Then he has proposed to you?'

'Yes, several times.'

'And you have said No?'

'Most emphatically.'

'And yet he is willing to spend all this money for you?'

'Yes, perfectly willing. Look here, Gwyn, look at the matter in a sensible, business-like light. All Jews expect to give as well as take, and Israel Isaacs is an Israelite of the Israelites. You and I are the two best-looking and smartest women that he has ever known in his life. He gains distinction from being friendly with us. If he is seen by any of his own people with us, he is proud, and they are curious and perhaps a little envious, for all Jews are more proud of their Christian acquaintances than of the most intimate friendship of all their own nation put together. If he stands this expense for me, and I make a good success, it will always be to his advantage—he will always be able to say that he discovered me. Do you see?'

'Yes, I see what you mean, but I don't approve of it any the more for that,' said Gwyn slowly

and deliberately. 'It seems to me that you are laying yourself under the most tremendous obligations to a man who is really only a casual acquaintance, picked up in a boarding-house. You can never repay him.'

'And why not?' asked Angelique fiercely.

'Angelique, don't be angry, don't think me a wet blanket,' said Gwyn earnestly. 'You know I love you better than anything else in all the wide world, and you know I would do anything to help you on, but we have been up in London eight months now, and what nearer are you to what you wish for than you were when we first left home? Not one step! You have run up a lot of bills that you can never pay; you have spent money working up interest here and making friends there; and I am afraid if you give this matinée, that it will only be a dead failure. You know Le Brun had but little opinion of your gifts, and said freely that you would never do anything on the stage! Dear Angel, I don't say this to hurt. It is best to look facts straight in the face. Each time you played with amateurs I have watched you carefully; and I always came away with the same feeling, that though you are brilliant and fascinating in ordinary life, picturesque in looks and lissom and elegant in figure, yet the moment you step

on to the stage your brilliancy and your charm all go, and you become stiff, awkward, and lifeless.'

'Yet you kept all this to yourself,' said Angelique in a dangerously quiet tone.

'Because at first I thought it was the newness, the strangeness, the want of familiarity with it all,' the other replied. 'As long as our own money lasts, Father would not wish you to stop your efforts; you have a right to go on; but when it comes to taking a large sum of money from a little Jew, then it *is* time to speak.'

'Well, you have spoken, and now nothing more need be said. Once for all, Gwyn, I won't be interfered with in this matter. I must have a matinée; it is necessary to my career. My father cannot or will not give it to me; Israel Isaacs can and gladly will. I have already accepted his generous offer, and he is now in treaty for the Haymarket Theatre.'

'And your explanation to Father and Mother?' asked Gwyn.

'None is necessary except to tell the bare truth,' said Angelique, with dignity. 'I am not ashamed of being helped by Israel Isaacs; he is my friend, my true friend. I have never been ashamed of my friends; and if I succeed, I shall be prouder still, because I shall have justified his belief in me.'

'And if you fail?' asked Gwyn involuntarily, for a remembrance came back to her of how she had asked the great actress, Le Brun, her candid opinion of her young sister. 'A beautiful creature, my dear,' was Le Brun's frank comment, 'but stupid as a mule, and dense as an owl. One can neither drive nor lead her. She will never make an actress; it isn't in her.'

'I shall not fail,' cried Angelique, her eyes all in a blaze. 'But if I do——'

'You will have to go home to Beech Croft,' said Gwyn prosaically, 'and then how will all your debts be paid?'

'My debts,' said Angelique, bursting into a laugh, 'are so infinitesimal that I don't think you need worry about them.'

'Your black silk,' said Gwyn. 'your last tailor-made—the little blue gown and the one you had for Ascot—hats—shoes——'

'Oh! do stop, Gwyn, why go into it all?' the girl cried impatiently. 'What *is* the good of going on? Look here, I have quite made up my mind to one thing. I *won't* go home. If all else fails, I shall marry Israel Isaacs.'

CHAPTER VI

As an actress Angelique Dodsworth was a dead failure! Never perhaps in all the history of the modern stage had any young woman, beautiful, well-dressed and elegant, after six months' training under several of the first teachers of the day, proved herself such a complete and entire stick when put to the serious test of a public performance. The house was fairly filled—mostly with paper—and the more important managers were conspicuous by their absence. Miss Le Brun sat in the front rows of the stalls, and took a keen and deadly interest in the performance from beginning to end. In the Royal box was Israel Isaacs, all alone in his glory, and embowered in bouquets of rare and costly flowers. In the opposite box was Gwyn with Mrs. Dodsworth, who beamed majestically upon the scene, as who should say, 'Now that a daughter of mine has gone upon the stage, a new era has dawned for dramatic art!' Gwyn was suffering untold agonies of anxiety and dread. The lavish Israel, who prided

himself on doing things well, had generously provided their box with a couple of superb tributes to be offered to Angelique at a suitable moment. But the heavily perfumed flowers seemed to strike a wrong note, and their beauty jarred upon Gwyn's sensitive nature; they seemed to be making sure too soon, and she would have liked to have put them away quite at the back of the box, so that they might be quietly smuggled out of sight if they were obviously not required. But Mrs. Dodsworth, who was troubled by no qualms as to the possibility of a daughter of hers being anything but a success, liked the feeling of sitting in a London theatre the observed of all observers, and would not allow them to be touched.

So there Gwyn sat, sick at heart, and full of foreboding. She tried to take an intelligent interest in the play, which was one very frequently aired for the purpose of showing off the merits—to say nothing of the demerits—of young ladies on their promotion. But she was only really conscious of one thing, which was that while the rest of the company were making gallant efforts to carry off a success, Angelique was simply a hideous and ghastly failure. Every time that she came on, Gwyn felt herself going hot and cold, every word that she spoke seemed to the anxious listener like a travesty, every move-

ment was angular and clumsy, every gesture a violation of nature and common sense.

It came to an end at last—the worst hours do in due course. The bouquets were handed to an awkward and shamefaced Angelique, who believed in her soul that she had won every laugh and every round of applause, feeble though each one had been. 'I think it all went off charmingly,' said Mrs. Dodsworth, hitching her cloak up about her shoulders with a gesture peculiarly her own, and staring hard at the green curtain which had been let down at the end of the play.

Gwyn's heart gave a throb. Yes, it was a good thing that her mother had not seen things as they really were, but through the glamour of her own importance; for when the bad notices poured out the following day, she would have at once the instinct of protecting an ill-used Angelique rather than of blaming the girl for her failure.

'Don't you think we ought to be going?' she suggested. 'They will be wanting to shut up the theatre.'

Mrs. Dodsworth looked round vaguely. 'Angelique did not want us to go behind,' she said lingeringly.

'She especially begged us not to do so; we might be in the way of managers,' answered Gwyn.

Mrs. Dodsworth rose. 'I wonder how many managers went round,' she said.

'Let us go home,' said Gwyn. 'Angel will tell us all when she comes back.'

She was nervously anxious to get out of the theatre, to shake the dust of the afternoon's humiliation off her soul. She felt as if every person still in sight was identifying her with her sister's failure. At last she piloted her mother out into the street and got her into a cab, whose driver she ordered to go to Derrick's.

'Angelique had five bouquets,' said Mrs. Dodsworth, in a tone of much satisfaction. 'Gwyn, don't you think we ought to to telegraph to Father?'

'No, no, not till the papers are out,' said Gwyn feverishly. 'You know we can be sure of nothing till then.'

'But she had five bouquets,' Mrs. Dodsworth persisted.

'She could have had a hundred and five if she had arranged for them beforehand,' said Gwyn, who began to despair of ever making her mother see things in their right light.

Mrs. Dodsworth, however, babbled quietly on, telling Gwyn a long story about a frock which she had had new for her sixteenth birthday, and which was extremely like the gown which

Angelique had worn in the second act, only that her dress had been of gingham, while Angelique's was of silk; hers had been blue, while Angelique's was of a decided heliotrope. 'I always like Angelique best in those little simple frocks,' said Mrs. Dodsworth as the cab turned into the street leading to Derrick's; 'they show her off so well.'

Gwyn sighed, a sigh that was strangled in its birth, as she thought of that particular little 'simple' frock. It had cost sixteen guineas at a Bond Street *modiste's*, and was the cheapest of the three new gowns which Angelique had had for the occasion. How they were to be paid for, God alone knew!

Mrs. Derrick, who was always described by Mrs. Dodsworth as 'an eminently respectable person, my dear, and quite devoted to me,' met them as they entered the house.

'A great success, I hope,' she said, by way of greeting them.

Gwyn hesitated for want of some noncommitting form of prevarication, but there was no hesitation about Mrs. Dodsworth. She beamed blandly upon Mrs. Derrick, and answered promptly with a large vagueness which sounded, as it was, the essence of satisfaction.

'Everything that we could wish,' she said. 'And my daughter had five bouquets.'

'How delightful! I am so glad. I hope she will bring them home and give us the benefit of them. Do come into my room, Mrs. Dodsworth. Afternoon tea is over, so I thought you would like a cup to yourselves.'

'So thoughtful of you,' said Mrs. Dodsworth graciously, following the landlady into the sitting-room. Then she sat down upon the wide chintz-clad sofa and enlarged smoothly upon Angelique's triumphs.

'Of course, I was dying to go round and see her, but it was impossible. All the managers went round at once; it is their only chance of securing a new star. I only hope that Angelique will not be foolish in letting them get the better of her. If she would only have consented to let me receive these people and make terms, I know it would have made all the difference in the world. But it is the same with all the young folks nowadays; they will go their own way, and their way is not always our way.'

'I daresay Miss Dodsworth's agent will look after all that,' suggested Mrs. Derrick, pouring a little boiling water into the china teapot the better to air it.

'Oh! her agent will be there, of course,' replied Mrs. Dodsworth. 'Ah, well, I am very glad she has made such a success of it. She was never

intended for the stage—indeed, a year and a half ago I could not have believed that I could have sat calmly to watch a daughter of mine make her *debut* as an actress; but, poor child, she had an affair—well, an engagement—and the man did not behave——'

'I don't think Angelique would like to have that talked about, Mother,' put in Gwyn, whose pity for Angel had come back a thousandfold.

'My dear, surely *I* am the best judge of what is good behaviour or bad,' said Mrs. Dodsworth, with a great assumption of dignity. 'Gustave *did* behave very badly to Angelique, and she has never been the same girl since. I am too thankful that she has found some distraction; for, of course, she has never had the smallest *need* to do *anything* for a living.'

'You misunderstand me, Mother,' said Gwyn, who saw that it was vain to hope to stem the torrent of her mother's flow of reminiscence.

'Of course,' Mrs. Dodsworth went on, expanding yet more and more under the influence of the fresh hot tea and buttered toast, 'life at Beech Croft is a little dull for a girl, even if she has every luxury—horses to ride, carriages and the best society for miles around. It was because we felt that so strongly that her father and I were willing to let her try this experiment.'

Mrs. Torville felt herself growing crimson with shame at her mother's airy description of life at Beech Croft. She looked at her in utter astonishment, wondering whether she did really deceive herself into a belief of her assertion that Angelique had enjoyed all the advantages which she so glibly recounted. A vision of the dear old rambling farmhouse, with its long row of windows looking into the quaint village street, came before her. It was a sweetly pretty house, two stories in height, with wide windows and many creepers over-climbing it. It was beautifully kept, too, with the neatest of short muslin blinds to the upper windows, and with handsome lace curtains shrouding those below. Mrs. Dodsworth's steps too were always clean washed, with no disfiguring white stuff bedaubing them. In summer the stone vases on either side the entrance were gay with flowers, and in winter a ruddy glow always gleamed from the windows. It was an ideal middle-class country house, and they visited with the vicar and the doctor and all the better-class farmers and private persons. But of luxuries there were few; the 'horses to ride' meant old Beauty the pony, which was as old as Angelique herself; and the 'carriages' meant the solid tub of a waggonette drawn by the matronly Jinny. Truly, Beech Croft

was a dear old place, and had been in the Dodsworth family for several generations; but plain, honest, God-fearing John Dodsworth had never pretended to the possession of any better position than that held by his father and his grandfather before him; he aspired to being no more than a better-class farmer, sometimes holding office as churchwarden, and taking a keen interest in the affairs and politics of the district.

Fortunately, Mrs. Dodsworth's explanations were brought to an abrupt termination by the entrance of Angelique and Israel Isaacs. Angelique gratefully accepted Mrs. Derrick's offer of a cup of tea, and sat down by Gwyn with an air of extreme weariness.

'And how many managers came round to see you?' Mrs. Dodsworth asked eagerly. 'Did you have very good offers, Angelique?'

'Not one!' said Angelique curtly. 'You must know perfectly well that the whole thing was a dead failure from first to last.'

'A dead failure! But you had five bouquets!' Mrs. Dodsworth cried incredulously. 'And the applause was deafening.'

'Was it?' said Angelique bitterly. 'It did not sound so to me. Of course, it was all Wilmot's fault. The brute took care no one should get anything out of it except himself. But I'll be

even with him yet. I mean to chuck up acting and go in for journalism, and I'll give him a bad notice every time I put pen to paper.'

'Go in for journalism—what, write for the newspapers?' Mrs. Dodsworth gasped.

'Yes,' returned Angelique, with a defiant stare right into her mother's meaningless, bewildered face. 'And I only wish I had begun with that at first. I should have been at the top of the tree by this time.'

Gwyn involuntarily gave a sigh, then gathered up her belongings and left the room. She had barely closed the door of the bedroom behind her when Angelique came darting in, shutting it again with a crash, and turning the key viciously in the lock.

'Oh, Gwyn, Gwyn, it's all over!' she cried, flinging herself down in the big armchair by the fireplace.

'My poor Angel, it is hard on you,' murmured the other.

'Yes, and to hear Mother babbling on, going into details about everything of which she is utterly and entirely ignorant, is too maddening for words. My God, how am I to get through the next three months?'

'Why three months?' asked Gwyn.

'I've got to go home, haven't I?' Angelique

asked impatiently. 'I've no sort of excuse for stopping here. And our year is up. Father won't give me any more money. Is it likely?'

'But why three months?' asked Gwyn, who was honestly puzzled.

'I must live somewhere till I am married,' Angelique snapped fiercely.

'Oh, Angel!' Gwyn cried, the light suddenly breaking in upon her. 'You've not promised to marry this—this little Jew!'

'Of course I have,' shifting her shoulder impatiently from the touch of Gwyn's tender hand.

'But, darling, it's monstrous, it's impossible. You don't love this man, you cannot marry him,' Gwyn cried. 'Think, dear, it's for life—for good and all—day and night—think of it! There will be no getting away from him, as—as you are able to do from Mother when she worries you.'

'I do think of it, I have thought of it,' Angelique answered. 'But it's got to be, and I must go through with it with the best grace I can.'

'But, Angel, my darling,' cried Gwyn in an agony, 'after Gustave, how can you do it?' This little Jew—who is he? What is he? Where did he come from? His very name is an abomination—Israel Isaacs! Was ever such a name! You can't do it, Angel. Leave it to me, and I

will save you from yourself. You know that I love you better than anything on earth. I will talk to Mother and Father, and get them to let you stay here a few months longer, and perhaps you will make a success of journalism. Anything will be better than marrying such a man—that would be an outrage on your womanhood! I should look upon you as worse than the women in the streets.'

'Poor wretches!' said Angelique in a softer tone; 'are they so bad? One does not know their temptation nor what broken love first drove them to it.'

'That's as may be,' said Gwyn. 'God knows, I am sorry for every woman whose life goes wrong; I am sorry for every woman who sells herself body and soul for money. But when it comes to you—*you*, Angel—it is not the mere feeling of being sorry; it is anguish—agony! My dear, you will give up this monstrous idea of yours; you will go home for a little while——'

'I cannot go home,' said the girl slowly.

'Why not? Angel, you have done this in the bitterness of your disappointment, but it can be undone—if it is not too late.'

'Yes, it is too late.'

'No, Angel, no. Think of your future life—your very name, Angelique Isaacs, Mrs. Israel Isaacs. Oh! Angel, Angel!'

'He is going to change his name,' said Angel, 'many Jews do that. He is going to take the name of Ingram—Ian Ingram.'

'He may change his name to please you,' cried Gwyn indignantly, 'but he cannot change himself, he cannot change his nose, his thick-lipped Jewish mouth, his nasal Jew voice. Oh! Angel, Angel, come home. Be an old maid, stay unmarried for ever, but don't degrade yourself like this. Don't do this awful thing. Oh! to think of my Angel the mother of a tribe of little Whitechapel Jews like this Israel Isaacs. Think, think what you are doing. Come home, Angel, come home!

'I cannot go home,' said Angel, turning her white face around to her sister. 'Even if I could stand Mother, which I couldn't, I must marry to pay my debts.'

'Your debts!' Gwyn echoed.

'Gwyn,' said Angelique, drawing her sister down so that she might speak low in her ear, 'putting the cost of this matinée out of the question, and, mind you, I promised I would marry him if I failed, I have my private debts to think of. He will pay them, and I shall be troubled no more with them. Mother and Father would go mad if they knew. It's the only way out of it; for one way or another, I owe over five hundred pounds!'

CHAPTER VII

SINCE Angelique had given her promise, it was but a matter of time and the cost of a few pounds for Israel Isaacs to be transformed legally into Mr. Ian Ingram. Why he should have chosen such a name as Ingram, or such a name as Ian to precede it, was best known to himself; but as he explained to Angelique, he had kept to the same initials so as to be able to go on using his sleeve-links and similar belongings. To Angelique, so long as she had not to bear such an appellation as that of 'Mrs. Israel Isaacs,' the actual name was a matter of the most perfect indifference. She was very wretched at this time; for Gwyn had shut her mouth into a thin line, and refused to discuss the engagement after that terrible day when Angelique had failed so hideously to 'strike ile' as an actress, and had confessed to being in debt for more than five hundred pounds. She felt that there was nothing more to be said; that it was but a waste of words to further argue the point with Angelique;

she felt indeed that there was nothing left for the girl to do but to marry, and there seemed just then to be nobody else at hand sufficiently well off to be worth marrying.

Not that Angelique wished to discuss the engagement or the rapidly approaching marriage. She had to endure more than enough discussion at the hands or the lips of her mother. For that good lady had forgotten every other topic of interest in the delightful task of enlarging upon the advantages of Mr. Ingram's position and the singular virtues of his remarkable character.

Naturally, the news of Angelique's engagement spread like wild fire through the neighbourhood, and all the friends and acquaintances of the Dodsworth family came from far and near to learn full details of the match, and to offer their congratulations. Among them was Mrs. Williams her lips smiling more than her eyes, and her tongue dipped in gall and wormwood.

'So, Angelique,' she began, as soon as she had seated herself, 'I hear we are to congratulate you *again*.'

'Not unless you wish, Mrs. Williams,' said Angelique, very sweetly.

'Well, I hope you will be more fortunate *this* time,' said Mrs. Williams, staring hard at the girl, and wondering what was the meaning of her

pale cheeks and wan looks. Mrs. Williams had a habit of staring fixedly at people, as if she were a Kodak, and would take a better negative by looking longer. Angelique bore the process fairly well, and if she flushed, did not quail under it.

'You are always so kind,' she said deliberately.

Mrs. Williams had the grace to look a little ashamed. 'You will let us know when to send our little souvenir,' she said, in some confusion.

'Oh, any time,' said Angelique promptly.

'You would like something for your house?' suggested Mrs. Williams insinuatingly.

'No, I would rather have something for myself,' replied Angelique, without hesitation. 'You see Mr. Ingram is not badly off, and he will do the furnishing part of the business.'

'Oh, he is well off!' exclaimed Mrs. Williams.

'I certainly should not marry him if he were not well enough off to furnish a house for me,' said Angelique.

'And he is——, but perhaps he lives on his means,' suggested Mrs. Williams, who was dying to know all about the bridegroom elect.

'Mr. Ingram is in the city,' replied Angelique, well knowing that such a term conveyed about as much to the country-bred lady as if she had said that he was something in the moon.

'I see. Ah, here is your mother. My dear Mrs. Dodsworth, how well you are looking!'

Mrs. Dodsworth was looking well. She enjoyed nothing so much as a wholly new topic of conversation, and the importance of Angelique's approaching marriage was as meat and drink to her. Her graciousness was maddening, her condescension something to be felt, her self-satisfaction immense. As she sat down, Angelique got up.

'Now, Mrs. Williams,' she said, with a mingled sweetness and acidity which was like the curious jam, half salt, half sweet, which comes from the Cape, 'now that Mother has come I can leave you to hear all the details. It is dreadful for a girl to talk over her own marriage when she has a mother who will do it so much better. You won't mind my going, I'm sure.'

Mrs. Williams had no choice but to smile her acquiescence, and Angelique disappeared. Mrs. Dodsworth began to enlarge on the subject immediately.

'We are so delighted with this marriage, Mr. Dodsworth and I,' she began. 'Rich? Oh yes, very rich indeed. Angelique will live in great style. He has given her such presents—everything in such taste, so exactly suited to her.'

'And they are going to be married—when?'

'In about six weeks' time,' blandly.

'She is not going to dawdle *this* time,' remarked Mrs. Williams.

'You are thinking of her flirtation with Gustave Maynard?' said Mrs. Dodsworth, taking up her knitting and clicking away with her needles. 'Oh, that was a mere boy and girl affair—there was never anything serious in it. I should have been *very* sorry if *that* had come to anything.'

'I thought you looked upon young Maynard as a good match at the time,' said Mrs. Williams, who remembered perfectly well all Mrs. Dodsworth's lecturettes on the subject.

'I—oh, dear me! no, you are quite mistaken there,' Mrs. Dodsworth cried. But I said nothing to oppose it. I have always said that I would never drive a daughter of mine to an injudicious marriage by standing out against it. I have always thought,' she went on, in a tone of pious self-congratulation, 'that parents work a great deal of harm by meddling too much with their children's affairs.'

'There I fully agree with you,' said Mrs. Williams mendaciously, for she distinctly remembered the very day when Mrs. Dodsworth had spoken of Gustave Maynard with bated breath, as it were, and had given her an impression that her opinion of him was so high that it was only

the fact that Angelique was a daughter of hers which rendered her in any way fit to be bride of his. 'Then you and Mr. Dodsworth are very much pleased with this Mr. Ingram?'

'More than pleased,' Mrs. Dodsworth replied. 'He is so genuine—so generous—such a gentleman. And he is so devoted to me.'

A ribald thought flashed through Mrs. Williams' every-day mind that Mrs. Dodsworth's son-in-law elect did not yet know her very well. Mrs. Dodsworth rambled serenely on, all unconscious of the ironical ideas flitting through her visitor's busy brain.

'We are going up next week for a few days,' she continued. 'Mr. Ingram wishes to introduce Angelique to some of his relatives. He is one of a very large family, all rich people, and delighted at his marrying a——' she had been on the eve of saying 'a Christian,' but bit the tell-tale word off short and covered her blunder with such skill as she could muster up. 'So delighted at his marriage with Angelique.'

Mrs. Williams had, however, noticed the hitch and, like Captain Cuttle, made a note of it. 'And I suppose she will be getting most of her things in London?' she remarked, more deeply impressed by Mrs. Dodsworth's explanations than she would have admitted for worlds.

'Oh, everything!' Mrs. Dodsworth replied. 'Mr. Ingram would not allow Angelique to wear anything but the very best. He is most particular about her, and he thinks nothing good enough for her. Then, of course, there are all the details of the wedding to be arranged.'

'Of the wedding! But is not Angelique going to be married in the usual way?'

'In London,' said Mrs. Dodsworth, letting the news slip out with apparent unconsciousness.

'In London!' repeated the other, staring more fixedly than ever. 'What, isn't our church good enough, and her own father the vicar's churchwarden?'

'Oh, it is not for *that*!' said Mrs. Dodsworth, with mysterious friendliness, 'but, of course, we have Mr. Ingram to consider. He has so many friends and relations in London, and naturally, as Angelique is going to live among them, he wishes them all to be at the wedding.'

Mrs. Williams shut up her mouth, and determined in her own mind that her marriage gift should take the form of a pair of silver sleeve-links; for, she argued, as she released herself from the unctuous stream of Mrs. Dodsworth's converse, what was the good of spending a lot of money over a wedding present for a girl who was not only going to live away from Beech

Croft, but who was actually to be married away from the place?

So it crept out that Angelique Dodsworth was to be married in London, and her wedding gifts from Beech Croft folk were proportionately meagre. Not that she cared a button for that. She was marrying for money, and Ian Ingram had plenty of it and to spare; what did a few cheap wedding presents from a little hole like Beech Croft matter? In truth, the fewer belongings she had to remind her of the old narrow life the better.

Never in all this world did weeks drag along so slowly as the weeks which preceded Angelique's wedding. She hated and loathed Beech Croft more fiercely than ever, not only every stick and stone of it, but everybody in it. She viewed the scene from the dining-room window every morning with a fresh accession of disgust and weariness. She pined and longed to be free, to be married, to be in London, her own mistress, with plenty of money, and an adoring husband whose only object in living was to do her will, to be free of all this petty, tittle-tattling, gossiping life, to have done with Beech Croft for ever.

As for the presents which arrived from time to time, she regarded them with the most absolute disfavor. 'Another tea-cosy!' she remarked one afternoon, when the maid brought

in a large parcel wrapped up in white paper. 'I wonder why Beech Croft should think it necessary to unload all its bazaar raffles on to me? Do they think I'm going to keep a Berlin wool shop?'

'Shall I open it?' her mother asked.

'Oh yes, Mother, pray do, if you don't mind the trouble. I know pretty well what it is,' Angelique replied. 'I shall stow them all away and give them to the first bazaar I'm asked to patronise. Ah! I told you so—crewel work this time. Look at the thing! Why, it's enough to give you the horrors.'

Every one of the homely offerings had the same effect upon her—that of making her long more and more fiercely for the day when she would really turn her back for ever on the quaint little town in which she had been born. She even grew in his absence to think of Israel Isaacs, that is to say, Ian Ingram, as of an entirely superior being, as somebody who would release her from this bondage, who would set wide open those enchanted gates through which she would pass in to a wider, fuller life beyond, the life which goes by its own name in quotes.

'I know you don't like my young man,' she said one day to Gwyn; 'but, after all, he is worth a million of these people here. He is no beauty,

it's true, and he had the misfortune to be born a Jew, but he loves me, and is good to me. What more could I want?'

'If you love him,' began Gwyn, when Angelique interposed.

'No, I'm not what is called in love, Gwyn. I shall never be in love again. I like him and I respect him, and I mean to shape my whole life so as to repay his intense goodness to me. I'm going to be the best wife in London, Gwyn.'

'God grant it, Angel,' was Gwyn's comment. But her mind involuntarily went back with a rush to a dozen ventures in the past on which Angelique had staked her very all, and she caught herself looking forward with a pang of dread to the next complete failure.

CHAPTER VIII

THERE was no longer any such person as Angelique Dodsworth. By the aid of various Rabbis and a large contingent of florid-skinned persons generously blessed as to facial, not to say racial, features, Angelique had been, with many strange rites, transformed into Mrs. Ian Ingram.

How happy she was! Even Mrs. Dodsworth's curious interpretations of the Jewish character and customs failed to annoy her; for she was free at last of the old traditions, the old obligations, the old ties and associations. Mrs. Dodsworth wept a little when the final parting came, and Gwyn held her sister hard for a moment, with a terrible sinking at her heart and a firm conviction that their days of sisterhood were quite over.

Angelique, however, would not allow the glory of her wedding day to be dimmed for a single moment. 'No, you must not cry either of you,' she said, in her gayest tones. 'This is the happiest day of my life, and I cannot have it

spoiled by tears. Pray, let me see you both happy and smiling to the very last.'

It was Gwyn who made the effort and forced a smile to her sad face. Mrs. Dodsworth contented herself with turning away and gurgling a few damp entreaties to Ian Ingram that he would be good to her darling. And Ian Ingram with his arm part of the way round Mrs. Dodsworth's ample waist, promised and vowed many things with a readiness which in itself might to some people have sounded to a certain degree suspicious. But to Mrs. Dodsworth, in spite of the tears, everything at that moment was tinted a brilliant rose-colour, and she was firmly convinced that Angelique was the luckiest and happiest girl to be found in the three kingdoms that day.

And, at last, the bride and groom got away from the crowd of guests at the hotel where Mrs. Dodsworth's reception had been given, and started on the first stage of their life together. Angelique was supremely happy; for Ian spent money like water, tipped all the railway people right and left, bought her a great sheaf of papers and magazines (nothing cheaper than sixpence), and pulled up the window with an air which made the girl feel that he really was an out-of-the-common fine fellow after all.

And it lasted—well, for several months. It was as if a glamour was over her, and under its influence she altered strangely. All her ideals of life seemed to have undergone an utter and complete change. Ian's friends, Ian's ways, Ian's views of life all became Angelique's. Her outlook upon the world was totally different; she began to parade the superiority of things bought in the City over kindred articles purchased at the West End.

Their first home was in Maida Vale, and Angelique extolled that quarter of London as if nobody with even a limited gleam of understanding could, by any chance, of their own free will, entertain the idea of choosing a house elsewhere. The first time that Gwyn came up to stay with her she expatiated on the delights and conveniences of Maida Vale with a fluency which reminded Mrs. Torville quite painfully of the mother she had left at home at Beech Croft. 'It's so open and airy,' she explained, as she showed Gwyn over the house.

It was both open and airy, situate in one of those long, not to say dreary, avenues which run like rays of a star from the church where the buses stop. The houses were not detached, but they were roomy, handsome domiciles, decorated in the latest fashion which was the fashion

among house-builders, with each a tiny conservatory and a little enclosed square of private ground leading to an extensive common garden.

Under Angelique's direction, and by the aid of Ian Ingram's careful financial mind, the house soon began to assume a finished aspect. Angelique was nothing if not up to date, and Ingram was nothing if not a bargain-hunter, and between the two the house quickly grew into a model of its peculiar *genre*. To Gwyn it looked fine and unaccustomed, but Angelique had not visited among the tribe of the Israels for nothing. Gwyn experienced a continual desire to ask 'why?' but her instinct told her to crush the desire down with a merciless hand. For to her simple, refined, provincial mind, many things looked strangely out of place. There were pictures set on the wall crossways, and bits of drapery nailed over them in an opposite direction, so as to balance the want of equilibrium; Chinese mandarins' cast-off garments were impaled against the conventionally modern European wall-papers like the spread eagles of the Imperial arms of Russia; little palms stood in gaudy pots on the much bedraped mantel-shelves, and in many other sunless and airless parts of the well-darkened rooms where no green thing could possibly live. Cheap modern Dresden, Ian

Ingram's hard-won bargains, consorted cheek by jowl with old English pottery and the latest design in Danieli's Venetian glass. Rugs were thrown here, art squares there, cushions littered the couches, and Liberty silk was frothed about in patches, chenille monkeys climbed up the curtains, and the flower-pots in the little conservatory were all decorously tied up with silken sashes. To Gwyn it was all very oppressive and stuffy, like the manners and customs of the visitors who came crowding in on first and third Sunday afternoons. It was all very Hebraic, very Oriental, but strangely unpleasant!

It was the same with the table too; even there Gwyn found an element of strangeness. Ian Ingram was a member of the Reformed Jews, and a lax one at that; but yet he was a Jew, always a Jew, with all a Jew's characteristics and instincts most strongly developed. The little meannesses of his sordid nature showed themselves in matters relating to food with a plainness which was appalling to his Christian sister-in-law. He was most particular to have Kosher-meat, but he did not in the least mind cheating the butcher over the price of it. It was the same in everything, and Angelique's highest praise of a man nowadays seemed to consist merely of a tribute to his business capacity.

'True, he is not much to look at,' she said, in answer to a remark of Gwyn's concerning a visitor who had just left them, 'and, of course, he has made himself what he is by his own efforts, but Ian says he's the sharpest man in the city, and would cheat the Devil out of his teeth in half an hour.'

'I wonder you care to have him here,' Gwyn ventured to remark.

'I wouldn't,' returned Angelique simply, 'but he is so useful for card-parties. I always go partners with him.'

After this, Gwyn went home, and Angelique was left to live the new wonderful life which had so completely severed her from even the associations of that old, simple, dull existence in which clean muslin and dusters had contributed most largely to the charm of the household. And, for a time, nothing in particular happened.

Then Angelique began to have trouble with her servants. They objected to Jewish ways, and kicked against the continual pricks of Jewish customs. One left after another, until Angelique was in despair, and finally appealed to her husband to help her out of the difficulty. 'You know we cannot go on like this,' she said to him one morning while they were at breakfast. 'Every day

the difficulty seems to get more and more pronounced. Can't we get Jewish servants?'

'I don't believe so. Our people don't care for service,' said he carelessly.

'Then we had better give up living so strictly,' said Angelique. 'I'm sure its all intensely silly. Why on earth shouldn't you cook meat one day the same as another? It has always been good enough for me——'

'That's out of the question,' said he promptly. 'I am quite lax enough as it is. My governor would cut me off to a dead certainty, and Bennie will naturally do everything he can to foster the feeling against you.'

'What feeling?'

'Against your being a Christian.'

'But I thought your people were pleased at your marriage,' she exclaimed. 'Why, Ian, you know they were, as pleased as Punch.'

'Yes, in a sense, but not in other ways. They're made to feel it, you bet. You'd better offer the cook a couple of pounds a year more. I daresay it's only a try-on for something of that kind.'

So Angelique offered the lady in the kitchen an increase of wages if she would remain in her place. It was all against her instincts, but she was worn out by a long succession of servants of

all sorts, and let her pride go by the wall. To her surprise, Mrs. Grubb informed her that it was not a question of wages.

'I was never one to stand out about wages if the place was a liberal one,' she said. 'I find no fault in that way, and I like you, Mum, as a missus. But I don't like Jewish ways, and I can't live in the same house as Millicent. If you like to get rid of Millicent, I'll stay on with pleasure.'

'And why don't you like Millicent?' Angelique asked in mild surprise, for Millicent was a parlour maid who had been with her a couple of months and had given her untold satisfaction.

'Her and me don't mix,' replied Mrs. Grubb, in an oracular tone.

'I'll speak to your master about it,' said Angelique.

'Then,' returned Mrs. Grubb promptly, 'I may as well consider my time as being up on the 28th.'

To this Angelique made no reply, but she thought over it during the day, so much so, that she was almost prepared for finding that Ian would take the contrary side when, the dinner over, she disclosed Mrs. Grubb's decision to him. Still, his frank astonishment in some sense reassured her.

'Not a question of money!' he exclaimed.

'Why, what an old fool she must be. Then what is it a question of?'

'Of Millicent,' answered Angelique.

'Of Millicent! What about her? Surely, *she's* all right.'

'*I* thought so,' said Angelique, 'but Mrs. Grubb says she won't stop unless Millicent goes.'

'I'd see her at the devil first,' Ian Ingram blurted out.

'What difference can it make to you?' asked Angelique coldly.

His reply was prompt enough. 'Not the very least in the world. What difference can any of your servants make to me? But Millicent is a first-class parlour-maid, isn't she?'

'Oh yes.'

'Well, old Grubb isn't by any means first-class. At a pinch we can always get in a cook, however badly we may be off, but we can't get in a parlour-maid. Millicent gives a certain *chic* to the house. I can tell you, ever so many people have spoken of her to me. And to get rid of her to please an old cat like Grubb seems too silly and weak-minded.'

Thus primed, Angelique the following day conveyed the news to Mrs. Grubb that she would be expected to vacate her place on the 28th of the month. 'Your master and I both feel that it

would be very unjust to Millicent to send her away for no fault,' she ended.

Mrs. Grubb snorted. 'Very well, Mum,' she remarked, tossing her head in the air, 'all I can say is I 'opes as you'll never find Millicent out. But I've no grudge again' you, Mum; and for your own sake, I'd advise you to keep your eyes open and see what's going on under your very nose.'

'I think you are ill-natured,' said Angelique, in a tone of rebuke. 'You ought not to forget that Millicent has her living to earn just as you have.'

'There's different ways of earning a living,' retorted Mrs. Grubb, with significance.

Angelique, however, walked out of the kitchen without discussing the subject further. Still, she did for a few days keep her eye very sharply on Millicent; but finding no fault in her, she concluded that the older woman had been solely actuated by feelings of malice. 'They are all like that,' her thoughts ran. 'Scratch a Russian, and you'll find a Tartar. Ay, and scratch a servant, and you'll find a traitor. And, after all, she did not *say* so very much. It was what she implied that made me suspicious.'

By this time Angelique had been married more than six months! She was fond of saying that

she and Ian had quite settled down into old married people. They lived, in some sense, independent lives. For one thing, they followed different religions—at least, he followed the Jewish religion, and was apparently fairly regular in his attendance to the ceremonials of his faith. Angelique ostensibly belonged to the Established Church, which in this case simply meant that she did not conform to the religion of her husband.

At this time she had fallen into very delicate health, for there was a prospect of a baby by and by. Angelique began to lose heart a little, her sleep was broken, her appetite capricious, her nerves a good deal overwrought. In addition to this strain upon her, she was not a little worried about her debts. On that terrible and never-to-be-forgotten day when she had made such a hideous failure of her trial *matinee*, she had confessed to Gwyn that she owed one way and another over five hundred pounds. Now when she had promised to marry Israel Isaacs she had felt her situation to be such that she could not afford to run the risk of losing this chance of clearing herself. Therefore, she had been afraid, positively afraid to tell him the full amount of her indebtedness. She had for that reason put the figure at three instead of five hundred pounds; and, true to his bond, he had on

their wedding day presented her with bank-notes for that amount. At the time it had seemed to Angelique as if she could never have another care in the world; and on their return to London, she had promptly sent off cheques to every person to whom she was in debt, excepting Gwyn, that is to say. But with the best intentions in the world, five hundred pounds cannot be paid with three, and Angelique was not strong enough to use the whole of the money for the purpose for which it had been intended. She could not resist using just a little for small personal luxuries for herself, and taking a little more for buying odds and ends for the new house. She felt that she was really acting very honestly to send her tailor a cheque for fifty pounds, although his total bill was three times as much; and when she went to order a new dress, which she could have done very well without, she could not resist the persuasions of the manager to order a couple more dresses, the cost of the three bringing the bill up to just its original standpoint. It was the same everywhere. Until the entire sum was exhausted, she kept nibbling at it for illegitimate purposes instead of using it to reduce her liabilities; and as she was plunged into a rich and rather common Jewish set, wherein money was the hall-mark, her temptation to increase her debts

and outshine all the Jewesses of her acquaintance became quite irresistible. Once launched on that course, and with no wholesome fear of her mother's volubility to keep a check upon her, she trod the road to ruin right royally. She dressed like a courtesan and carried herself like an empress, and obliging tradespeople of all kinds flattered and fawned upon her, and the while the bills throve and grew apace, and Mrs. Ian Ingram would, if an opportunity had been given, have made as pretty a case of bankruptcy as has ever made copy for the morning and evening papers!

But the end was not yet!

CHAPTER IX

MR. AND MRS. IAN INGRAM sat at breakfast very early one morning. Breakfast was always an abnormally early meal with them, and Angelique usually came down in good time for it. She had indeed started her married life with a resolute intention of *never* under any circumstances being late for it or of indulging her natural inclination to be still snoozing among her pillows, leaving her spouse to cater for himself as best he could. To do her full justice, she had carried out this resolution very bravely, and but very seldom was Ian Ingram left to the ministrations of the excellent Millicent. Nevertheless, in spite of her praiseworthy desires, the hideous inconveniences of marriage proved sometimes too much for her, and the extremely delicate health, which was the result of her condition, occasionally made it impossible for her to carry out her good intentions in their entirety.

On this morning, however, Angelique had torn herself from her comfortable bed in extra good

time. I use the word 'torn' because, of a truth, the process had been one of real self-sacrifice. She was feeling wretchedly ill, dissatisfied with herself, her life, her house, and every person and thing connected with her. But she had dressed with care and a full consciousness of how drawn and haggard her face was, how pinched about the nose, how hollow as to the eyes. She had arrayed herself in a particularly dainty breakfast gown of heliotrope cashmere, much be-trimmed with coarse string-coloured lace, a simple and elegant garment which had cost seven guineas in Regent Street, but which did not in the least conceal the change in her figure. 'Ugh! You—*thing!*' she had cried to her own reflection, as she turned away from her dressing-table. But no one would have guessed it as she sat at the head of her table that morning. She looked delicate, what is called interesting, and she smiled at Ian as if she had not a care nor an ungratified wish in the world.

'What time shall you be home for dinner, Ian?' she asked, when she had poured out his coffee.

'Oh, the usual time,' he answered.

'We have to go to the Montagus' to-night,' she said. The Montagus were some very rich people whom they had not known long, and their real name was Levy.

'What time?' he asked.

'Any time after ten; I wouldn't go too early. Dinner at eight, then?'

'Yes, that'll suit me right enough,' he rejoined.

'Very well. By the way, Ian, are you very busy to-day?'

'Pretty well—why?' he asked.

'I wondered if you would look in and see that carved oak dresser I saw at Lyon's yesterday.'

'What do you want it for?'

'To fill that recess.'

'But it won't match the Chippendale things.'

'That won't matter. I like things like that mixed,' she said.

'What did they ask for it?'

'Twenty-five pounds.'

'Offer him ten.'

'I wish you'd go. You always make a better bargain than I do. Lyon knows I'm not used to beating people down.'

'Then the sooner you learn the better,' said he, with a laugh.

'You might go, Ian,' persuasively.

'How many kisses will you give me if I do?'

'I—I—don't like *selling* my kisses,' Angelique cried impulsively.

'What—not even to me?'

'No—not even to you,' bravely.

'But how am I to know you won't want to start furnishing entirely in oak? You know you don't really want that dresser at all.'

'Oh yes, I do. I want it dreadfully, awfully, horribly. You don't half know how much,' she protested. 'I keep picking up bits of china here and there. I bought a perfect old Worcester plate yesterday for eight shillings, and I've nowhere to put it.'

'That's all very well, but why buy old Worcester plates? You don't want them, you've no need for them, and we are spending a fearful lot of money without that.'

'But you wouldn't deny me a little hobby like gathering a few cheap pots together?'

'But eight shillings for a plate isn't cheap,' he persisted. 'I could understand your getting a new tea-service, whole and sound, and the latest fashion—but these old things——'

'But you can't put *new* china in your rooms,' cried Angelique, in a much mortified tone, and with the tears starting readily into her eyes.

'Well—well—if it pleases you to buy a lot of second-hand china, pray do so,' he exclaimed hastily, for he was a soft-hearted person, and really fond of Angelique, so that it had hurt him to know that he had run the risk of bringing tears into her eyes.

'And you'll go to Lyon's?' said Angelique, choking down her mortification, and taking full advantage of the flag of truce.

'I'll see—if I've time,' he said. 'But I am most fearfully busy to-day. I won't promise.'

'But you'll go, I know,' said Angelique, rising as he did, and going close to him. He was not so tall as she was, and she looked overwhelmingly large as she stood there. 'Dear Ian,' she said, laying her hands on his shoulders and kissing him half a dozen times, 'you are awfully good to me, dear. You always do what I want in the end.'

So Ian Ingram went away, and Angelique sat down again at the table, thinking how she could most profitably spend the hours which would pass between then and dinner-time. When she had finished the meal, she took the newspaper to the window and sat down to read it. She never read any paper except the *Morning Post*, which was one highly pleasing to her ambitious nature. Millicent came to clear the breakfast-table while she was sitting there; and looking up once or twice, Angelique noticed that the girl seemed to have a very heavy cold upon her.

'You've got a very bad cold, Millicent?' Angelique said at last.

'Yes, I have, M'm,' said Millicent, feeling for her handkerchief.

'Go and use some of my eucalyptus at once,' said Angelique. 'Pour a little into the palm of your hand and snuff it up. It will do wonders for you.'

'Thank you very much, M'm,' said Millicent.

After the girl had left the room, Angelique noticed a piece of paper lying on the floor; and, being of an extremely tidy nature, especially in small things, she put the *Morning Post* down and picked it up.

'Really, Millicent is getting quite careless,' her thoughts ran, as she sat down again. 'I suppose it's always the same with these very *chic* parlour-maids; they hate all kinds of housework. Still, she really ought to look round a room and see she has left nothing untidy about.'

She took up the paper again and began to read it, and presently she laid it down, her thoughts once more with the carved oak dresser which she felt sure Ian would succeed in getting for her. She would have it to stand there in that recess, and she would deck it with all the old china she could get together. Of course, she had not nearly enough, but still there was already enough to make a fair show, and she would pick it up bit by bit and——*why*, what was the meaning of this?

In her day-dreams about the old oak dresser,

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she had absently unfolded the sheet of paper which Millicent had left by mistake upon the floor. It was a sheet of her own notepaper, with her monogram in one corner and the address of the house neatly printed in red in the one opposite. And written on it in Ian's handwriting was this astounding order—

'To Messrs. Paley & Todd, Regent Street.

Be good enough to supply Miss Page with any goods she may select to the value of £20.

IAN INGRAM.'

Angelique stared at the letter as if she could not believe what she saw written there. 'Supply Miss Page—to the value of £20.' And who in the world was Miss Page, and how came Ian to be supplying Miss Page or Miss Anybody else with goods to the value of anything? Then it flashed across her mind that Millicent's name was Page, of course. She had meant to call her Page, but had preferred to use her Christian name lest people should think she had started a page-boy, a buttons. So that was the little game, was it? That was why Ian grudged her spending a few paltry shillings on a fad like old china, when her only desire for it was to make *his* house look more *chic!* Well, two could play at such a game, oh yes. Ian was fond of saying

that no one could get over him, that he was a Jew—'but *I*,' ran Angelique's angry thoughts, 'am something more difficult to tackle than a Jew. Ian shall find out what it is to pit himself against an outraged woman.'

Yet, in spite of her anger, her fury, she hid the paper away in her desk and locked it securely. And presently, when Millicent came in, ostensibly to fetch something from the sideboard, she found her mistress still indolently occupied with the *Morning Post*. She watched the girl closely all the same, and saw that she cast an anxious glance about the room, and Mrs. Ingram gave a bitter, smothered laugh as Millicent went out in unmistakable disappointment. 'The young lady is uneasy,' she said to herself. 'She cannot think what she has done with the precious order.'

No ordinary words will adequately describe the tumult of feelings which passed through Angelique's mind that never-to-be-forgotten morning. She felt baffled, enraged, upset, hurt, and surprised, all by turns. She remembered what Mrs. Grubb, the departed cook, had said—'I only 'ope you may never find Millicent out.' She felt outraged that she, a Christian woman of good parentage, had given herself body and soul—yes, body and soul, that was the worst of it—to

this Jew, who had scorned her so much, valued her so little, that he had deliberately arranged an affair with her servant, her *serving-maid.* A great scorn filled her whole soul, and the first bitter heart-pang which she had felt since her marriage came to add to her suffering then. For the first time she thought of her old love Gustave Maynard; for the first time since she had borne her new name she recalled him with a mighty regret. If only Gustave had been true, if only he had been brave, brave enough to risk poverty for her sake, all this could never have happened. She would never have known the fever and fret of a London life, of a London failure, of a marriage of ways and means. And then, just as she was on the point of melting into a flood of blessed tears, which would have brought her relief, which would have washed the greater part of her heartache away, a realisation of what was suddenly came to her, a remembrance that she was Israel Isaacs' *wife*, the mother of his unborn child.

In a moment her tears were dried at the fountainhead, her eyes blazed and burned like fires of living coal, her whole soul rose up and loathed herself and him, and the little life bound up with her own most intensely of all. She got up and paced about the handsome room, up and

down, to and fro, as if she were trying to beat her fury into the Persian carpet which covered the floor. Oh, she was so angry, so hurt. It would have been bad at any time, even if she had been given to quarrelling with Ian, if she had been bad and disagreeable to him; but when she could only look back and recall how, over and over again, she had sacrificed her own inclinations to his, how she had suffered from the pains and penalties of continuing the race, *his* race, how she had identified herself with his people, his set, had visited almost exclusively among Jews, and they not of the best, how she had practically given up her own friends, and to a certain extent turned her back upon her own people, and for such an end as this—well, Angelique could have thrown herself down upon the floor and wailed aloud in her grief and her despair.

But even in the face of a shock and dire grief, a morning cannot last for ever. In time Millicent came to lay the table for lunch, and her mistress went upstairs and mechanically made her toilet for the afternoon, as was her custom.

'Open a small bottle of champagne, Millicent,' she said when she was seated at table; 'I don't feel very well.'

Millicent opened the champagne as she was

bidden, and asked in rather a tremulous voice if there was anything else that she could get. Angelique replied in the negative, and then looking keenly at Millicent, remarked that she was looking very ill. 'What is the matter, Millicent?' she asked. Her self-possession was really wonderful. She was very pale, but at such a time that was not remarkable; her manner was perfectly composed, and not much more chilly than usual. Angelique had always a somewhat distant tone towards her inferiors.

When she put the direct question to Millicent, the girl blushed a vivid scarlet from her chin to the roots of her hair, and she replied, with some signs of confusion, that she believed she had taken cold—that was all.

Angelique smiled sardonically as the door closed once more behind the servant-maid; but while speaking to her, she had maintained a perfectly calm demeanour, and quietly gave her some simple advice as to the best course for any one with a severe cold to take. It was strange, but even in the midst of her trouble, she seemed to find a grim kind of amusement in playing with the erring Millicent as a cat plays with a wretched little mouse.

Like many other well-to-do people in London, Ian Ingram had not cared to set up a stable

of his own, but he indulged Angelique in a victoria and a brougham jobbed by the year from an adjacent livery stable. Angelique had that day ordered the victoria for a quarter before three o'clock; and when it came round, she bethought her of one or two shops she needed to visit, and of one or two afternoons at which she had promised to put in an appearance. The idea of sending the carriage away and of remaining indoors never occurred to her. She went upstairs and got ready to go out, making her outdoor toilet with great care. And then, just as she was drawing on her gloves, an idea struck her, a thought so audacious, so bold, so startling, that it fairly took her breath away. *She would take Ian's order to Paley & Todd, and she would spend the twenty pounds there, leaving them to think that she was the Miss Page indicated in the order.*

From her earliest youth, almost from her baby days, Angelique had been utterly and entirely a creature of impulse and enthusiasm. In that moment, of a truth the gravest situation of her whole life, she never hesitated for one instant. She went straight downstairs and to her desk in the window of the pleasant dining-room, and, unlocking the drawer in which she had laid the order, she took it out and put it in an

envelope matching the paper on which it was written.

'You need not put me into the carriage,' she said to Millicent, who held the door open for her. 'Stay within doors. Give me the rug.'

She took the light rug, with its smart embroidered monogram, from the girl, and walked to the carriage by herself, settling herself with much deliberation and care. 'Go to Buszard's,' she said aloud.

But from Buszard's she drove down to Paley & Todd's, and entered the shop with the air of a queen.

'Your pleasure, madam?' was the question which greeted her.

'I have an order here from Mr. Ian Ingram to the value of twenty pounds,' she said calmly.

'Certainly, madam,' said the stately shop-walker, whose manner instantly underwent a quick change, which would have done justice to a variety entertainer. 'Mr. Ingram was here this morning to advise us of having given it—on his way to the city, I daresay.'

Angelique looked at him. A look can express a great deal, and hers did. The stately gentleman shivered a little, and he promptly relapsed into his former manner of excessive deference. 'And your pleasure, madam?' he asked.

'I will look at some mantles,' said Angelique.

Eventually she chose a grey mantle of fine cloth and silk, profusely ornamented with silver trimmings, a garment which could only have been worn in a carriage and by an elegant woman. 'I will take it with me,' she said, in a tone which admitted of no question.

The elegant shopwalker remarked to one of the young gentlemen belonging to the establishment that Ian Ingram must be pretty well off. 'Fancy his getting hold of a splendid-looking woman like that and putting her off with a twenty-pound order. What queer creatures women are—and in her condition too.'

Meantime, Angelique went on with the programme which she had laid down for herself, and arrived home in ample time to dress for dinner. By that time she had lost all outward trace of the storm through which she had passed earlier in the day; and when her husband returned home, she met him with a calm face and a manner which had nothing at all unusual about it. As a matter of fact, he went straight to her in her bedroom.

'I've got your dresser,' he announced. 'They're going to send it to-morrow morning. You were quite right about it—it's a very handsome thing.'

Angelique put out a hand and held up her face to be kissed, all just as usual. 'How good of you!' she said. 'And what did you get it for?'

'What do you think?'

'Not for ten pounds.'

'Well, no, but for fifteen pounds ten. Lyon stood out for twenty pounds, but I told him to take it or leave it at fifteen pounds, and he gave way, provided I'd pay the porterage home.'

'That was immensely clever of you,' said Angelique, quite admiringly. 'I shall love to set it all out and arrange all my old pots upon it.'

'I am sure you will, dearest. Well, I must go and dress. I'm ever so late as it is. You've been out, of course?'

'Oh yes. I did some shopping and an afternoon or two,' said Angelique indifferently.

She watched the two very closely during dinner, but in the manner of neither could she detect anything at all unusual. She realised though, that while she went to fetch her cloak, and put the finishing touches to her toilet, Millicent made it her business to be in the dining-room; and when she came down, she found

the girl just leaving the room, and Ian Ingram sitting at the table with a half-uneasy expression upon his face. He jumped up when he perceived her.

'Is the carriage here yet?' he asked.

'Not yet, I think,' said Angelique, whose heart was filled with an unholy joy as she perceived that he had been told of the mysterious loss. Then she added carelessly, 'Millicent will let us know when it comes.'

She wandered to the window, and stood looking at the recess which was to be filled the next day by the old oak dresser. 'My recess will be charming,' she remarked, in a tone of enthusiasm which completely deceived Ian.

'Oh yes, I daresay,' absently.

Angelique turned round. 'Why, Ian, what is the matter? Has anything gone wrong?' she asked innocently.

Ian Ingram shook himself out of a brown study. 'Wrong? No, no, of course not. What should go wrong? I was thinking of a matter of business, that's all.'

'Oh, business!' said Angelique carelessly. 'By the way, Ian, you are going to Mrs. Morton Collingwood's garden-party with me to-morrow, are you not?'

'Yes, I suppose I must. I can't leave the

office till half-past four though. I've got an appointment at four.'

'That will do quite well. I hate going early anywhere.'

'You like to make an entrance,' he said laughing.

'Always,' said Angelique.

CHAPTER X

THE following day was Millicent's afternoon out. Angelique realized that she was out by the fact that the housemaid waited at dinner. 'Is Millicent out, or is her cold worse?' she asked.

'Millicent is out, M'm,' replied the housemaid.

'It was very foolish of her to go out with such a cold,' said Angelique. 'She could have had another day later. I expect she will be quite ill.'

'Has Millicent a cold?' asked Ian, who knew quite well exactly what kind of health Millicent was enjoying at that moment.

'A shocking cold,' said Angelique briefly.

They were dining an hour earlier than usual, as they were going to a theatre; and when they returned home, the entire household was in bed, for Ian had insisted upon taking Angelique to have some supper when the theatre was over. So nothing more was said about Millicent, and Ian Ingram did not know what had happened until the next morning when he entered the dining-room.

Now when Millicent had told him that she had lost the order on Paley & Todd's, he had taken it for granted that she had inadvertently destroyed it, and had taken an opportunity of writing a second order. As any business man would do, he had added a footnote to the effect that this order was to cancel one of a previous date, inadvertently destroyed or mislaid. Judge then of his surprise when, on coming downstairs, Millicent met him with the news that on presenting the order at Paley & Todd's she had been astounded by receiving the information that the first order had been presented, and that a lady purporting to be Miss Page had bought goods to the full value of twenty pounds.

'Nonsense! They must have made a mistake,' said Ian Ingram incredulously. 'At any rate, you shall not suffer, Millicent. I will go in and see them about it, and arrange that you shall have your things anyhow.'

A few minutes later Angelique herself came into the room. Ian looked at her keenly, but she seemed so much as usual that he dismissed all idea from his mind that she had learned anything of the affair.

He stopped his cab at Paley & Todd's on his way to the city, and going in, found himself face to face with the stately shopwalker. 'Pray,

what is this about the order I gave on you?' he asked.

'Well, sir, the lady came and got the goods,' the shopwalker replied.

'But what lady? The lady they were intended for was the one who presented the second order.'

'I'm sure I am very sorry, Mr. Ingram, but the lady—or I should say, *a* lady—came during the afternoon of Tuesday, the day you had advised us that you had given an order upon us, and as we had no reason to doubt her identity, we supplied the goods.'

'Yes—yes—I know,' impatiently. 'But who was the lady? That's what I want to get at. What was she like? What age—manner—appearance?'

'Well, to tell you the truth, Mr. Ingram,' said the shopwalker, 'I was rather surprised that such a lady should come with an order. She came in a carriage——'

'A carriage!' Ian Ingram gasped. He was beginning to grasp the truth. 'What kind of a carriage—what liveries?'

'A single victoria—golden-brown liveries. She was tall, with a very dignified manner; and, if I mistake not, she was in an interesting condition—indeed, I may say very interesting,' and he smirked in a knowing way, as if he was

giving an unmistakable clue to the lady's identity, as in very truth he was.

'Good God!' ejaculated Ian Ingram. He was naturally a very dark and sallow man; but at the receipt of this bit of information, every shade of colour faded from his face, leaving it of a ghastly and livid hue.

'It was not the lady you expected, sir?' asked the shopwalker.

'It was—but, tell me,' breaking the remark off sharply, 'what did she buy?'

'A long grey cloak—a very handsome thing.'

'All silver trimmings?'

'Yes.'

Ian Ingram positively groaned. 'Well, there is nothing more to be said, and it can't be helped. I may as well tell you the rest, because I don't want it to be talked about. That was my wife. Good-day. I'll send you a cheque later.'

He went straight out of the shop and back to his cab, his mind all in a tumult, his nerves shaken, his head positively whirling with excitement. And yet, even in the midst of his annoyance and his vexation, he could not help thinking with intensest admiration of Angelique's adroitness in promptly taking advantage of her opportunity. 'By Jove!' his thoughts ran, 'what a

nerve she has, what a head, what pluck! As if a little rat like Millicent could ever be anything but a convenience to me,' and then he lay back in the cab and laughed out aloud until the cabman opened the little door in the roof in sheer wonderment.

During the rest of that day Ian Ingram went through many changes of feeling—vexation, dismay, irritation, and, running through all, that curious admiration for Angelique which was a totally new sensation to him. I don't say that he had not admired Angelique immensely from the very first time that he had ever seen her. In a physical sense he admired her more than any woman he had ever seen, but this feeling was quite a different one.

In a physical sense Angelique had been a terrible disappointment to him; for she was, like all enthusiasts, very easily ruffled, and she was strangely free from sensuality. For months past her health had been inconveniently delicate, and his ardour had therefore been considerably dimmed, and this accounted for the star of Millicent being in the ascendant. Not for a moment do I mean to imply that Ian Ingram was tired of Angelique; that he regretted having made her his wife; or that he was any less proud of her than he had been at the time of their

marriage; but he had drifted into relations with Millicent without any feeling that he was doing Angelique a wrong, almost indeed with a half sort of notion that he was doing her a kindness.

Still, he felt that he must have the whole matter out with Angelique that night. She was dressed for dinner when he reached home, wearing a white tea-gown which trailed far behind her, and made her look more beautiful than he had ever seen her before.

He said not a word till dinner was over, and Millicent had left them together. Then he braced himself up and said, 'By the way, Angelique, I have something to say to you.'

'Yes—I know you have,' she replied steadily. 'I have been waiting for three days to hear you say it.'

'Angelique,' he burst out reproachfully, 'how could you do it?'

'Do it?' she echoed; 'do what? Pay you back in your own coin? I haven't done that—*yet*.'

'Pay me back? No. I mean, how could you nurse this up for three whole days? And how could you lower yourself by going to Paley & Todd's with an order as if you were—were——'

'A *Millicent*,' put in Angelique, in a tone of concentrated contempt.

'Yes, a Millicent,' he repeated passionately. 'If you wanted twenty pounds, God knows, you were welcome to it, or anything else that I had.'

'I didn't want twenty pounds particularly,' said Angelique icily. 'I wanted *that* twenty pounds—any wife would have felt the same; the only difference is, that few others would have had the pluck to act up to their feelings. But now that you have broached the subject, Ian, what are you going to do?'

'To do! What do you mean?'

'You don't expect me to go on as things are—to live in the same house with—your—mistress, and in my circumstances! Because if you do——'

'I expect nothing—I am going to do nothing,' he said firmly. 'This is your house; you do what you please in it.'

'Millicent or I leave it,' she said briefly.

'That is as you please. You keep or dismiss your servants as you choose.'

But Angelique shook her head. 'No, that won't do. I refuse to dismiss Millicent. I have no fault to find with her *as a servant.* You will get rid of your mistress, or your wife will leave the house.'

For a moment he looked at her. She was very

pale, and looked wretchedly ill; but her gaze was firm and unflinching, and her eyes so filled with disgust and contempt, that he fairly quailed beneath them. 'And after?' he said. The question forced itself through his lips without any intention on his part to ask it.

Angelique still stared at him with her great wide-open eyes. 'After,' she said wonderingly. 'Do you think that I shall forget this, put it aside as if it had never been? Do you think that I, who am suffering now through you, intend to go on bringing little Jews into the world to add to your glory and your prestige? You must have a very strange idea of women, of Christian women, at all events.'

It was the first time that she had ever used his race in any way as a taunt against him. She knew, as the words dropped out one by one like molten lead, that she was wrong, utterly wrong, to take advantage of it then; yet she went impulsively on, not caring in her great anger aud mortification how she ruthlessly trampled down the very foundations of her life's happiness.

Ian Ingram started up and caught hold of her hand. 'Angelique,' he said, 'you're not going to leave me; you're not going to set yourself apart from me; you're not going to let a

miserable little thing like Millicent come in between us? Don't say it—Angelique—my dearest——'

'Am I your dearest?' she asked suddenly.

'I swear before the God of my Fathers that you are,' he asserted solemnly. 'I swear to you that Millicent is and has been nothing to me but a mere convenience. I don't *care* a brass farthing for her. If you had been strong and well; I should never have looked at her. Is it likely? What is there in Millicent to attract a man who is attracted by you?'

'Then why mix yourself up with her at all?' she asked, in genuine amazement.

'I'm only a man,' he said humbly. 'I—I—cannot help being as I am. You have been so ill, so ailing all these months, I felt it a cruelty to trouble you with any wishes of mine. I—I—thought it was kinder to—to——'

'To ruin a girl rather than inconvenience me,' said Angelique, ending the sentence for him. 'It's very pretty, Ian, but a little thin, a little too thin.'

'I did not ruin Millicent,' he returned simply. 'I did not *seduce* her.'

Angelique shuddered. 'And to think I have had this creature in my house; that I have shared out my husband with her; and you speak

as if I ought to be very much obliged to her. Oh, it is too horrible, too loathsome, too utterly, horribly degrading.'

She broke down then, and began to cry weakly, piteously, and Ian Ingram stood by, not knowing what to do for the best, not knowing whether to take the bull by the horns; so to speak, and boldly kiss her into forgiving him, or whether to leave her alone until she had wept the worst pain of her trouble away. And while he was still hesitating between these two courses, the door opened, and Millicent came in, carrying the after-dinner coffee.

The noise of the coffee cups made known to Angelique that Millicent was in the room. She dashed away her tears, and rising to her full height, pointed at her with a trembling hand. 'Put that woman out of my presence,' she said, in a terrible voice.

'Woman yourself,' snapped Millicent, who, like a wolf in a lamb's skin, showed her teeth the moment she was ruffled.

'Do you hear?' said Angelique, speaking to her husband.

'Leave the room,' said he curtly to Millicent. Ian Ingram was the last man in the world to stand upon ceremony with an inferior, no matter what her relations with him might be.

'I 'aint going to be ordered about like a brute beast,' returned Millicent, who, like all her class, loved a row down at the bottom of her heart.

'Am I to speak twice?' demanded Angelique of Ingram. 'Put her out, I say.'

'Then I won't be put out,' cried Millicent, dodging cleverly past Ingram, and addressing Angelique in a high, shrill voice of excessive insolence. 'Why should I for you? I'm just as good as you are, and better. At all events, I'm not a common thief—yes, thief! Who went to Paley & Todd's and stole twenty pounds? Yah!'

'Leave the room,' thundered Ingram.

'I won't leave the room,' snarled Millicent; 'and lay so much as a finger on me, and I'll 'ave the law of you, so there! I'll leave the 'ouse to-morrow morning, but not at 'er bidding. Bah! I've demeaned myself by stopping in it, which I should not have done, only 'twas as good as a play to watch 'er airs and graces. Delicate 'ealth—pooh! Other women 'as delicate 'ealth. I'm in the same sort of delicate 'ealth as 'er, and *you* know it; you ought to, anyway. But I've got to go on toil, toil, moil——'

'*Will* you get that woman out of this room?' said Angelique, in a tone of exasperated desperation. She was ghastly pale, and she swayed to

and fro and from side to side like a drunken woman.

Opposite stood Millicent, tall, slender, vixenish, spite graven on every line of her face, a hideous smile contorting her lips. Between them stood Ingram, shorter in stature than either, not knowing what course to take, or what to do or say.

'Touch me if you dare,' hissed Millicent.

For a moment Angelique stood staring at her, her face working, her figure still swaying to and fro. Then she turned and fled from the room, leaving the field open and free.

In a trice Millicent tore after her; and Ingram, divining her intention, rushed after her into the hall. He gained the lowest step just as the tail of Angelique's white gown disappeared round the head of the stairs. Millicent sent a triumphant peal of laughter after her retreating mistress. 'Ah, ha! Ah, ha! I stayed you out——. Yah!'

For one moment there was dead silence. Millicent, with a face like a ghost now that the sham was at an end, clung to the bannisters, and Ingram, biting his lips, was trying hard to keep his hands off her. Then, as they stood there glaring at one another, they heard the banging of Angelique's bedroom door, and immediately scream, after scream, wild, piercing, hysterical

shrieks, rose upon the quiet air of the silent house.

'Before God in heaven,' said Ian Ingram, between his set teeth to the half-fainting Millicent, 'if any harms comes to her, I'll charge you with manslaughter.'

CHAPTER XI

MILLICENT left the house early the following day. She had a five minutes' interview with its master before she left, an interview which to her was an extremely unsatisfactory one. He saw her in the library, as they called the small den especially devoted to his use, and bade her shut the door in a tone such as she had never heard from him before.

'Here are your wages up to a month from to-day,' he said, in a hard business-like voice. 'And here is a cheque for ten pounds. The sooner you are out of this house the better for everybody concerned.'

'You don't suppose you are going to get rid of me like this,' Millicent began, in a voice of fury.

'I am quite willing to provide for your child, if there is one, and to pay all reasonable expenses,' said Ian Ingram, in a hard voice, and looking at her with a cold sneer on his sallow, strongly

marked face. 'If you had behaved yourself properly last night, you would have done much better for yourself. As it is, anything that I may do beyond what the law would compel will depend entirely upon whether you in any way annoy Mrs. Ingram or not.'

'She said things about me,' Millicent began.

'Mrs. Ingram had every right to do so, both in her capacity as my wife and as your mistress,' he said curtly. 'At all events, her name must be left out of any conversations between you and me now and for ever. You had better understand that clearly. Now go. You can send your address to my office; you know where that is.'

He made a gesture towards the door; and Millicent, for once in her life thoroughly cowed, shrank away without another word. Not that she was personally afraid of Ingram, or touched by the fact that her mistress was lying in extremest danger upstairs. Millicent was one of those people who are afraid of nothing and of nobody. She knew the law of the land pretty well, as most servants do, and this was not the first time in her life that she had played an important part in what is called a paternity case. But she did fear letting loose her hold of Ian Ingram. She did fear arousing his anger to such

an extent as to make him allow her no more than the bare sum usually voted in such cases. So far as her mistress was concerned, she had shot her bolt, and she was not by any means sure that she had not overshot it—in such eyes as hers, the one unpardonable sin. So Millicent left Angelique's house, her heart full of hatred, her whole soul concentrated on but one purpose—to bide her time, to wait, *to be revenged.*

And Angelique? She, poor soul, was lying prostrate in her bed, taking little or no notice of those about her, only overwhelmed by a vast sense of illness and an equally appalling feeling of intense exhaustion. A nurse in the uniform of an institution was moving to and fro when Ian Ingram, having brought his interview with Millicent to an end, came up to see how Angelique was going on. He went up to the side of the bed, denuded now of its smart lace 'spread,' and stood looking down upon her, his eyes full of compassion and pity, his whole countenance indicative of anxiety and distress.

'Mrs. Ingram is a little better,' said the nurse, moving to the other side of the bed.

Angelique opened her eyes. 'Is that you?' she asked feebly.

Ian Ingram bent down. 'Yes—it is I. You are feeling better, my dearest?'

'Not much.' Then, after a pause, 'Is she gone?'

'Yes.' He was not by any means sure that Millicent had actually left the house, but a little deception more or less would not matter, and it was better that Angelique's mind should be set at rest on the subject as soon as possible.

Angelique did not speak for a little time. Then she asked in her faint voice whether Millicent had been rude, or if she had gone away quietly? It seemed to him that she had forgotten the actual facts of the case; that she had no remembrance that she and Millicent were, in a sense, in the same boat, in the same situation; and that he stood midway between the two.

Ian Ingram bent down closer to her. 'Don't worry about her, my dearest,' he said soothingly. 'She will not trouble you again; she went away very quietly. I think she was frightened at what she had done. I really came up to ask you whether you would like to have any one sent for from home—your mother or Gwyn?'

Angelique positively shuddered, and was instantly aroused into an appearance almost of animation, while her words told him very clearly that she had forgotten nothing.

'Not for the world!' she exclaimed, in quite an energetic tone. 'I wouldn't have mother

coming here ferreting everything out and explaining things for the world. If you have any love left for me, Ian, don't suggest such a thing.'

'If I have—oh, my dear,' he broke out reproachfully.

The nurse had left them together, so that he had no need to guard his tongue on her account. Angelique closed her eyes again very wearily.

'We won't go into it all again,' she said; 'I never want to hear you mention her name again. We will try to forget it. I am very tired.'

She stayed very quietly among her pillows for a few minutes, Ian still holding her hand. Then she opened her eyes again and looked at him. 'Do you think I am going to die?' she asked suddenly.

He started perceptibly at her words. 'Oh, no, I don't think so,' he said hastily.

'Then don't send for anybody,' she said, with decision.

And Angelique did not die. She was shattered in nerve and shaken in body; but after a few days of complete rest and quiet, she was able to leave her bed once more and to lie on the wide sofa by the window. And later she was able to move about, and then to go every day for a drive, with the devoted Ian always in attendance upon her. She was really very well contented at this time.

It suited her sense of the eternal fitness of things that Ian should be ready for her sake to give up to her part of each day which was usually devoted to the sacred 'City'! Her every little caprice was carefully studied, her every whim gratified. She was surrounded by costly flowers, had several new tea-gowns, and felt no small satisfaction in remembering that Millicent, who was in the same boat with her, would have to go through her time without any of these alleviations. I suppose it was natural or at least feminine that she should feel like this; but the truth must be confessed that she spared no pains to make herself charming in her husband's eyes, and for the simple reason that she did not wish him to think Millicent the more agreeable of the two.

This state of things did not, however, last long. No woman in Angelique's state of health can undergo the strain of shock so great and excitement so intense without suffering more than a temporary ill effect therefrom; and Angelique, after a few weeks of apparent recovery, was stricken down once more, and this time the much dreaded catastrophe really happened. For after two days of excessive illness and extreme danger, a little dead child was brought into this world of sorrow, the babe whom she had once stigmatised to Ian as 'a little Whitechapel Jew.'

It seemed to harden Angelique. For days they did not dare to tell her that the child had died before it was born, and she believed that it was being kept away from her solely on account of her exhausted condition. Then, when she was able to speak again, she asked where her baby was, and how it was being fed?

'I intended to nurse it myself,' she said weakly.

'My dear,' replied the comfortable old monthly nurse, who had come up from the country specially to attend her,' 'you mustn't worry about the baby—he is all right. It's you we've got to think of.'

'But how is he being fed?' Angelique persisted.

'Well, my dear, it's very disappointing for you,' said the nurse, 'but you couldn't possibly feed him—it was quite out of the question.'

'Can't I see him?'

'No, my dear, you just lie still and take all we ask you and get well,' said the nurse. 'I'm sure your good gentleman has been well nigh distracted about you. My heart fair ached for him.'

Angelique would have laughed if she had not been so pitiably weak. As it was, she closed her eyes again with a faint smile curling her lips, and for ever so long she lay quite still without asking any more questions.

Presently, however, she spoke again. 'Gwyn —where's Gwyn?' she asked.

'Here, dear Angel,' said Gwyn, coming softly out of the gloom.

Angelique looked at her with a smile. 'Dear old Safety-Valve,' she murmured, 'I wasn't sure that it was you. So glad you're here.'

She closed her eyes again, leaving her hand in Gwyn's.

'Gwyn,' she said at last, 'there's something wrong with my baby. I know it—that old woman cannot deceive me.'

'Dear Angel,' said Gwyn, 'your baby was a beautiful boy——'

'*Was*,' repeated Angelique sharply.

'But the struggle was too much for him. You know you were very ill.'

'And he is dead?'

'My dear,' said Gwyn very gently, 'he was born dead.'

She stopped short, dreading the effect of her disclosure on the pale girl before her. But for a long time Angelique did not speak; then, at last, she said very quietly, 'Perhaps it's just as well!'

But, all the same, Angelique was hardened by the fact that her child had been born dead. Life was not the same to her after her confinement as it had been before, not even excepting that part

of it which had come after the disclosures concerning Millicent. Often and often during the period of her convalescence, when Gwyn believed her to be sleeping, she was in reality brooding over the circumstances which had led to the untimely end of her firstborn. She regretted the babe with an intense, bitter, overwhelming regret. She recalled how she had spoken of it as 'a little Whitechapel Jew' to the father who had wronged her, and sometimes she wondered if that was the reason why she had never seen it, her own child?

As she got slowly better these morbid feelings passed off a little, but her newly acquired hardness remained. Not in her personal intercourse with Ian; for to him, having always in her mind that 'the creature' was still in that condition which excites interest and pity for even the most unworthy, she was invariably as charming and fascinating as she knew how to make herself. No, Angelique's hardness consisted in going her own way more persistently than she had ever wished, or indeed dared, to do before the truth had come to light about Millicent. She never stopped now to consider whether she—that is to say, Ian—could afford a thing; if she wanted it, she had it. She gathered up old china with an avidity, and I may say a want of discrimination, which was

simply reckless; and having filled the carved oak dresser, she went off and bought another to match it.

'Hullo! another dresser?' said Ian Ingram, when he first perceived the new acquisition.

'Yes,' said Angelique carelessly. 'I was obliged to have some place for my pots.'

'Where did you get it?'

'Of Lyon.'

'And you paid?'

'The same as you did. I took a lesson from you. I said, "I want my dresser matching, and at the same price. Take it or leave it, but as I'm no Jew, don't haggle." And, of course, being a sensible man of business, he took it, and I got my dresser.'

'I wish you had let me get it for you,' he said. 'I could have made a better bargain probably. Will you have enough to fill it?' he asked, not a little to the wonder of Gwyn, to whom this quiet acquiescence in a man was a new experience.

'Oh, no, but I shall pick up a few bits while I am at Beech Croft. By the way, Ian, I want you to give me some extra money just to spend on pots alone.'

'Very well,' good-humouredly. 'How much will do you?'

'A tenner,' said Angelique promptly.

'Very well, you shall have it,' he replied. 'But when you want anything like that again, let me get it for you.'

Gwyn stared. She could not help it. 'Do you know, Angel,' she said an hour later, when Ian had gone out for an hour to the club, 'I don't believe you half appreciate that husband of yours. He is wonderfully good to you.'

'Oh yes, I do,' Angelique returned. 'What makes you think I don't?'

'Well, you never so much as said "Thank you" for his promising you all that money to waste on old china.'

'Ian understands me,' said Angelique quietly.

'But he *is* good,' Gwyn went on. 'You are very fond of him now, Angel?'

'Oh very,' said Angelique drily.

'Angel,' said Gwyn in a distressed tone, 'Angel, what is it? It's not like you, dear—you—you—seem so different to what you used to be.'

Angelique put out a slim hand covered with handsome rings, and laid it on her sister's. 'Dear old Safety-Valve,' she said caressingly, and no woman on earth could be so utterly caressing as Angelique was when she chose, 'I dare-

say I am different. I was always different to you. Would, for some things, that I were more like you, and yet—yet—I don't know. You were a good woman with a bad husband, and he broke your heart. I am no such very good woman, and my husband will never break my heart, because I shall never give him the chance. It comes to the same in the end—good women's husbands break their wives hearts, bad women's husbands break——'

'Don't, Angel, don't,' cried Gwyn in a tone of sharp pain. 'I cannot bear to hear you.'

'Poor dear, it's too bad to tease you,' cried Angelique penitently. 'I am always shocking you, dear old Safety-Valve that you are. But, my dear, let me tell you one thing in all solemn, sober truth—don't worry yourself to fiddle-strings over Ian and my shortcomings to him. It is precious sympathy wasted. Ian has a very good time, and I make him an excellent wife, better on the whole than he deserves. Don't get into a way of fancying that Ian is an ill-used and stinted person—it's not so.'

Mrs. Torville sighed and said no more. She was a simple, gentle creature, who had found life mostly a disappointment, though she still cherished illusions, more particularly such as dealt with the marriage state. She still believed

that marriages were made in heaven, although her own marriage had been from beginning to end as a foretaste of the other place with which eternity is commonly credited. At the time of Angelique's marriage she had been shocked, hurt, embarrassed, her feelings of propriety had been outraged, her sense of delicacy sorely wounded; and since that time, partly deceived by the tranquility which had prevailed during her brief visits to the house in Maida Vale, and partly influenced by Mrs. Dodsworth's glowing descriptions of the delights and glories of Angelique's everyday life, she had, quite against her own better judgment, come to feel that her favourite sister's marriage bore, as it should have done in the beginning, the blessed imprint of Heaven's own hand and seal.

She did not understand Angelique in the very least, and every day she was more and more puzzled and mystified. For one thing, her behaviour was so contradictory. At times her tenderness of manner towards Ian surprised and confounded her, and at others her intense bitterness and worldliness repelled and shocked her beyond measure; while at all times her way of openly scoffing at all that the everyday good woman holds most sacred and holy jarred upon

Gwyn's sensitive nature to a strangely unpleasant degree. Under no circumstances could Gwyn have brought herself to marry Ian Ingram; but having married him, she would have gone loyally through with her life, even if she had died in living it.

CHAPTER XII

It was with curiously mixed feelings that Angelique found herself once more in her old home. She had been married just a year; and that year, with its hopes and fears, its shocks and disappointments, had done more than all the years of her life which had gone before to open her eyes in the very widest sense and to make her what she had only, with a certain amount of recklessness, played at being aforetime—a woman of the world.

In one thing she was most altered of all, which was that her mother no longer irritated her. On the contrary, she had come to regard her as the most amusing person she had ever known, and it became a positive delight to start Mrs. Dodsworth explaining things in general, and one special subject in particular.

'I cannot realise that you have had a baby, Angelique,' Mrs. Dodsworth began, as soon as Angelique was fairly in the house.

'It's too true, Mother,' said Angelique, who was just then inclined to look at everything through rose-tinted spectacles.

'Yes, but to think that a child of mine should have a still-born baby,' Mrs. Dodsworth persisted. 'I never thought of such a thing as being in the least likely to happen.'

'I didn't want it to be still-born, Mother,' said Angelique mildly.

'No, my dear, no, and it must have been a very great disappointment to you,' said Mrs. Dodsworth sympathetically; 'but what I want to know is, how did such a thing happen? There must have been a cause for it.'

'Ah, that is what I cannot tell you,' returned Angelique—and it was true enough. 'You must have a talk to the doctor the next time you come to see us. I don't remember very much about it.'

'But if you had had a shock, or——'

'No use, Mother,' broke in Angelique good-humouredly. 'I cannot tell you what I don't know. Suppose you tell me all about the people hereabouts. How is Mrs. Williams going on?'

'More pretentiously than ever,' said Mrs. Dodsworth, with emphasis. 'And, poor soul, what she would do if she had not me to come to for ideas, I cannot think. I assure you, she has

got her drawing-room window curtains tied up precisely in the same way as mine.'

'Sensible woman,' said Angelique, who had recognised her own special fancy in window curtain arrangement the moment she had crossed the threshold of the room. 'There's nothing like having a good model to copy. You know that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.'

'Ah, well, Mrs. Williams is a poor creature in spite of her airs. She will be coming to see you, I daresay.'

'I daresay she will,' said Angelique indifferently.

Surely enough, Mrs. Williams did turn up at Beech Croft the very next day; the news of the arrival of 'the bride,' as Angelique was still called in the village, having spread through the neighbourhood like wildfire.

'Well, Angelique,' she began, as soon as Angelique had taken her hand, 'but I suppose I must call you "Mrs. Ingram" now,' breaking off with a snap.

'As you please, dear lady,' said Angelique sweetly.

Mrs. Williams snorted like a war-horse scenting the battle from afar. Angelique's sweetness and *insouciance* were almost too much for her even at that early stage of the interview, and the flippant 'dear lady' jarred upon her disagreeably.

She did not know that it was a term which Angelique had picked up from a much photographed actress of unblemished reputation and considerable social ambitions, combined with a singular absence of histrionic gifts, who, in her turn, had picked it up from a *con-sœur* who had successfully scaled the social ladder to the very topmost rung. Mrs. Williams knew nothing of actresses—they were all one of a clan to her, they were all tarred with the same brush. To her the term was synonymous with that of *demimondaine*, only that she used two little plain unvarnished Saxon words to express the same meaning. She did not know, poor benighted provincial soul, that there are actresses in whom virtue is a positive vice, in whom motherhood is a sampler to be held up for the admiration and example of all Eve's daughters. She was very provincial, very domestic, very old-fashioned, and she had never even heard of the new woman or the pattern actress; and so Angelique's 'dear lady,' coupled with the fact that her baby had been still-born, jarred upon her, and took away such shreds of sweetness and of sympathy as she had brought with her.

'Is your husband well?' she asked.

'Oh yes, many thanks,' said Angelique. 'Ian is very well.'

'You call it E-an?' she asked, for this had been a moot point with some of the people in the neighbourhood.

'I think most people do,' replied Angelique.

'Oh, do they?' said Mrs. Williams, in an unsatisfied sort of tone, 'I daresay they do; but to my mind it's an outlandish kind of a name for a Christian to carry through life with him. But there, Angelique, I quite forgot that your husband is—is—a——'

'A Hebrew,' suggested Angelique very sweetly.

'Yes, I meant that, and no offence, of course. When I said Christian, I—I—meant an everyday sort of person.'

'Don't put yourself out, Mrs. Williams,' said Angelique quietly, 'my husband is not the least ashamed of being a Hebrew; on the contrary, he is always feeling a sort of apology towards his own people because I am not one also.'

'Really!' in a tone of intense astonishment. Then after a silence, 'But I daresay that's natural, very natural. I've heard that Chinamen don't think much of our complexions, for instance.'

'Very possibly. A Chinaman would think you had too much colour, while a nigger would regard you as a poor washed-out thing. These are all matters of taste.'

'And Mr. Ingram—is he here?'

'No; I came down with Gwyn.'

'Without him! I wonder you liked to come alone—the first time, too.'

'My husband could not get away from business. He is a very busy man.'

'And I hear very well off,' chimed in Mrs. Williams, who was simply dying to ask what Angelique's dress allowance was.

'Oh, no, we live very comfortably, nothing more than that. By the way, Mrs. Williams, is the little china shop at Perringham still open?'

'Oh yes—I was past it the other day. Of course, you were very much upset about your baby.'

'I was very sorry,' said Angelique simply.

'Your mother was terribly upset about it,' Mrs. Williams went on blandly. 'And everybody wondered you didn't have her up to see you over it.'

'Very kind of them,' murmured Angelique. 'Ah, here is my mother. Mother, here is Mrs. Williams.'

Mrs. Dodsworth came into the room with her usual flat-footed, noiseless, yet heavy footfall, and with something of a new accession of dignity. Angelique turned in her chair to watch, with

most intense enjoyment, the total annihilation and discomfiture of her old antagonist, Mrs. Williams.

For a few days all this proved to be very amusing; and as Gwyn was always willing and ready to go off in the pony trap with her to hunt up stray bits of oak and china, Angelique enjoyed her visit to the old house exceedingly well. And Ian Ingram wrote every day, always deploring her absence, bidding her be sure to have a good time, and yet saying that he felt like a fish out of water without her. 'I miss you more and more every day,' he said in one letter, when she had been nearly a month at Beech Croft. 'This house seems like a charnel-house without you, and it is like coming home every night to a sepulchre to sit eating my dinner alone with only your old plates to look at instead of you. I shall dine at the club after to-night. I can't stand my loneliness any longer.'

After this, Angelique took pity on him and went back, and then he was free of business for a few weeks, which they spent together in a delightful tour in foreign lands which Angelique had never seen before. It was like a new honeymoon, a renewal of the first days of their marriage, and not even the shadow of Millicent and the remembrance of the little dead babe seemed to

be left to disturb the smoothness of the matrimonial waters.

'Ian,' said Angelique the morning after their return home to Maida Vale, 'I'm going to send out cards soon.'

'Yes, of course.'

'I think I might leave some people out this year.'

'Oh, who?' looking up.

'The Polenskwis—and the Josephs—and several others.'

'It seems a pity.'

'No, we're too Jewish altogether. I don't mind smart Jews, of course not, but these commercial Jews are no use to us.'

'But the Josephs are my cousins,' he objected.

'They talk through their noses, and wear too much jewellery,' said Angelique quickly. 'I don't like their kind. I'm going in for my own people—Jews are no sort of use to me. Besides, Ian, it's the ambition of all Jews to know Christians (in this country, at all events), so what is the good of your being married to a Christian woman unless you take advantage of it? I shall never get any further with your people, for you've no connection with the really swagger Jews, the Rothschilds and all those, and with

my own people I can practically know anybody I choose to.'

'Oh, well, you must do as you like about that, only pray remember that I am not possessed of unlimited wealth, Angelique, and that you mustn't increase our expenses just at present —rather the other way if possible. And take my advice, don't burn your boats behind you too soon. You wouldn't like to find yourself stranded without acquaintances of any kind.'

'I shall not do that,' said Angelique, in a tone of quiet assurance.

The result of this conversation was that Mrs. Ian Ingram sent out about a third of the number of cards that she had scattered over Jewish society a year previously, and quite two-thirds of those she received were consigned straightway to the oblivion of the wastepaper basket. The aftermath of this proceeding may be summed up in two words—great offence. For Angelique gave great offence to all those whom she left out, and still greater offence to all those who duly attended to her days, but whose visits she never attempted to return.

'Mrs. Ingram is beginning to weed,' remarked one rich and highly coloured Jewess to another on the third of these receptions. 'The Josephs

have not been asked, nor the Cecil Isaacs, nor the Solomon Israels.'

'Is that so? Well, I don't know that I blame her so much.'

'Of course, they are all perfectly furious about it. The Lerissa Josephs have been close friends of the Isaacs for ever, and are cousins too. And the Solomon Israels are far richer than the Isaacs.'

'She doesn't understand, and she doesn't care. Besides, she has grown tired of having so much family to think of,' said the second Hebrew lady indulgently. 'After all, she is not one of us, and can never quite understand all the things that we have to think of.'

Yet, nevertheless, each matron was filled with admiration for Angelique in having sufficient nerve to deliberately fly in the face of the entire Jewish community; and each was wondering in her heart whether, when another year came round, her name might not be the one to be struck off the list of this Christian girl's acquaintances?

Angelique professed herself quite horrified when her sister-in-law broached the subject to her. 'Cut people—give myself airs—weed my list? Oh, not at all. I didn't send out quite so many cards, for I had far more people last season

than this little house would hold with anything like comfort. Ian won't go into a larger one—says he cannot afford it. Such nonsense! So, as I said to him, "if you won't or can't move, we must cut our coat accordingly and ask fewer people."'

A few days later Ian spoke to her about it. 'By the way, dearest,' he said, 'what's this about your wanting to move into a larger house?'

'Goodness knows!' replied Angelique. 'I don't want the trouble of moving, not I.'

'But Rebecca has been upbraiding me for not letting you do so. By Jove, she made me feel a regular brute!'

'Ah, it is a thousand pities your sister Rebecca cannot mind her own business,' said Angelique drily. 'The truth of the matter is this. On my last day she attacked me before a lot of people for not having sent cards to certain people; and, as I could not own up before an audience that I had been deliberately weeding, I told her as you wouldn't move into a larger house, I really couldn't ask so many people to this one. When I want anything of you, Ian, be very sure I shall not employ your sister Rebecca or anybody else as a go-between.'

'I sincerely hope not,' looking at her with a smile which suddenly made Angelique think how very Jewish in feature he was. 'To tell you the

truth, dearest, I am very much relieved to find that you don't want to leave this house. Times are not so good that such an expense would not matter, and if you had set your mind on it——'

'You would do it?' asked Angelique, with a curious breathlessness.

'I have never gone dead against you yet, Angelique,' he said, with a dignity which was not untouched with pathos.

'No—no—you are very good in most ways,' she said hastily. 'And I don't want to leave this house. I'm very fond of it. I do wish, though, you would do one thing for me.'

'Yes?' he looked up sharply.

'I hate that overmantel; it annoys me every time I look at it. I should like to change it for a less heavy one.'

'That's a simple matter enough.'

'Oh yes. Did you think I wanted to ask for something impossible?'

'I thought it might be something more important.'

'Then I'll gratify you. I want some money—badly,' she said coolly.

'Money?'

'Yes; I have several bills to pay, and no money to pay them with.'

'What sort of bills?'

'For *chiffons*—one must have them. Somehow, money seems to slip through one's fingers like water.'

'How much do you want?'

'A few thousands.'

'No—seriously.'

'Well, I really want a hundred.'

'A hundred! My dear child, truly I cannot spare it just now. Money is fearfully tight everywhere. I'll manage twenty-five, though that's not actually convenient.'

'Twenty-five—that's rather a drop, isn't it? Well, I'll make it do for the present,' she replied ungraciously.

'You shall have it. But, Angelique, I hope you're not getting into debt.'

'I am in debt, of course—every woman is,' she said, in a tone of supreme indifference. 'But not such as you need worry about. Then I shall go to Lyon's and arrange about the overmantel.'

'Lyon will cheat you to a certainty if you do. Let me do it for you.'

'You don't know what I want.'

'We can go together. I'll meet you there about four this afternoon if you like.'

'Very well. By the way, you'll give me that cheque before you go out?'

CHAPTER XIII

WHEN Ian Ingram reached his office that morning, he found something in the nature of a shock awaiting him. It was in the shape of a letter, and the very first sight of the uneducated handwriting on the envelope gave him a sensation resembling a cold shudder.

'DEAR MR. INGRAM,' the letter itself ran, 'I take this opportunity of writing to you hopping that all is well with you as I wish I were at present. Sir, I have got down to my last shilling. God knows I've been careful, but my helth has been bad ever since I left your house and it is quite impossible for me to think of taking another place in my present cirkumstances. So I must ask you to do something for me, seeing that you was the cause of my trubble. Please send at once—or I'm here if you come.—Yours truly, MILLICENT PAGE.'

Ian Ingram was a very methodical man; he

noted down the address in his pocket-book, and then he tore the letter in halves and threw them into the fire. Then he sat down at his great desk and said—'D—n!'

But that did not prevent his looking over his correspondence or keep him from giving instructions to his shorthand clerk when that functionary made his appearance. 'By the way, I shall not see any one after half-past three to-day. I have an outside appointment at four o'clock,' he added, as a last instruction, when his letters were disposed of. Business thus far arranged, he found himself alone again. Then his thoughts went back to Millicent Page once more; and the more he thought of her, the more quickly did his annoyance at having been reminded of her existence evaporate. 'After all, poor girl,' he told himself, 'it was rough luck on her. A pity she didn't keep herself in hand well enough to hold her tongue; but there, women are all alike, their feelings are such a trouble to them.'

He shook himself free of his thoughts, and began looking over some papers of considerable importance to him, meaning not to let the existence of Millicent Page worry him again until he should have to write a cheque later on. However, try as he would, he could not force his mind entirely away from the writer of the

piteous letter which he had just destroyed. Her rather pretty face kept coming in between him and the papers before him, and in a sense reproaching him for what was past and yet not past.

'Hang it all,' he said at last, 'I'll go and see her and get it over. If I send a cheque, I may find out afterwards that she has had a mishap, and is simply doing me in the eye. I didn't mean to see her again at all; but, after all, it's a necessary thing to do, and moreover, a thing that *nobody* can do for me. It's half-past eleven now—I've time to go before lunch. Yes, I'll go and get it over.'

He looked at the carefully noted address again. 'H'm! Store Street, Clerkenwell. Clerkenwell—horrid place to live in.' He pitied Millicent not a little. Then he struck the handbell on his table.

'Oh, Mr. Johnson,' he said, when the clerk came in, 'I am going out. I shall not be back till after lunch. If any one particularly wants to see me, you can arrange it for any time between 2.30 and 3.30. I can see no one later, but I have no appointment for to-morrow excepting one at three o'clock.'

'Very good, sir. And what about that business of Mrs. Greville's?'

'Oh, that! Yes; well, ask her to come on Friday twelve o'clock! I will have everything in train by then.'

'Very good, sir.'

'So Ian Ingram was free to set out for the dingy street in Clerkenwell from which Millicent had written. He walked a couple of streets away from his office before he saw a cab which he described in his own mind as 'good enough.' Having found this, he got into it, and told the driver where to go. And by the time he got there, he pitied Millicent more than ever.

A dirty-faced girl of about fifteen opened the door in answer to his knock. 'Does Miss Page live here?' he asked.

'Miss Paige—yus, she does,' the girl replied.

'Can I see her?' he further questioned.

''Ow, yus. Come in. 'Oo shall I saiy?'

'Oh, never mind the name,' he said, feeling a sudden qualm rush over him.

''Ow—orl right. Gow in there, will yer?'

'In there' was the small front room, a dingy apartment furnished with a chest of drawers, four hair-seated chairs, a small round table, and some cotton antimacassars. It gave Ian Ingram the impression that it was only used for funerals.

Millicent came to him immediately; and the moment that his eyes fell upon her, he saw that

there could be no reasonable doubt as to her condition. He noticed, too, that she looked exceedingly ill.

It must be confessed that Millicent was particularly judicious in her manner to him. She met him with the half-hesitating way of one who has got into a scrape, but wishes to blame nobody excepting herself for it. She sat down on the chair nearest to him, saying that she was that weak she really could not stand about, and then she looked round the room with a hopeless gaze, and said, 'Isn't it a wretched hole?'

Ian Ingram agreed with her fully. He had scrutinized her closely during the few minutes which had passed since her coming into the room, and saw that she was speckless and very neat, just as scrupulously presentable as he had always been accustomed to see her.

'I'd soon make this room look decent,' she said pathetically, 'but my stepmother won't have it used every day, and thinks a fire is a wicked waste. It's no use wasting time cleaning it out if she won't have it used.'

'No, no,' said he; then added, 'I didn't know you had a stepmother, Millicent.'

'No? Ah, well, she lets *me* know it, I can tell you. Every minute of the day she throws

my misfortune in my face—and—and—I've paid her well so far.'

'Oh, well, you can soon stop that,' said he soothingly. 'You must have known perfectly well I shouldn't leave you in the lurch. Is it likely?'

'You never know what is or isn't likely with a man,' said Millicent, with a sniffle. 'I thought you'd given me up for good and all, yes—I did,' with a sob. 'Of course, I know I made an awful fool of myself, but—but—I was that fond of you——'

'Don't, Millicent,' burst out Ian Ingram, feeling inclined to choke.

'And when I realised that it was all no good and never would be, and that I could never be anything to you, why, I got that mad, I don't know what I did or what I said. And—and—I only made you angry. And how I've fretted since—and——'

'Poor little girl,' said Ian, hitching his chair a trifle nearer to hers.

'I am so unhappy here,' Millicent went on miserably. 'I haven't even got a bed to myself —and—the meals are beastly; and just now when I fancy other sorts of things to eat, it falls hard on me.'

'Poor little girl!' repeated Ian, edging yet

closer, so closely indeed that somehow his arm found its way round her waist, 'we must find a way out of all that. Look here, Millicent, I can't stand seeing you like this—and—and—partly through me, too. I'll take you down to Brighton for a few days.'

He well knew that Angelique detested Brighton, and would never want to go there. Millicent looked up eagerly, then dropped her head again.

'I can't go to Brighton,' she said despondently. 'I've nothing to wear but this, and I haven't any sort of a cloak. I'm wearing a shawl when I do go out, which isn't often.'

He smiled. 'We'll soon mend that. I brought you some money this morning, as I did not know whether a cheque would be as convenient. Go to Peter Robinson's and get yourself a smart black tea-gown and a cloak thing—a proper one Do you think twenty pounds will do what you want?'

'Oh yes, I can get turned out proper for twenty pounds,' Millicent exclaimed joyfully. 'And do you mean you'll really take me down to Brighton—*with you?* Oh, Mr. Ingram——'

'Couldn't you say Ian?' he suggested. 'Or stay, we'd better go under another name, just for safety! Wood—Mr. and Mrs. Wood. You might call me Jack or Tom or George.'

'Jack,' she said promptly, then caught him to her in a wild and jubilant gush of feeling. 'Oh, dear, dear, darling Jack, be good to me; don't make me come back here—it's just like 'ell.'

'Oh, I think we'll manage better than that,' he said soothingly. 'And do you think you can be ready to go down to Brighton to-morrow? Yes—then meet me at Victoria at ten to five without fail.'

'I'll be there,' Millicent cried.

'I must go now,' he said, looking at his watch. 'What? Oh, the money—yes, of course. Let me see now—twenty pounds, in notes—and here are three sovereigns more. Make it do, but be sure that you look nice, as nice as you can.'

He kissed her very tenderly, and went out to the cab which he had kept waiting for him. And on the way back to the restaurant where he usually lunched, he mused with a glow of self-satisfaction that he was doing the right thing by a woman who had trusted him, and that whatever his duty to Angelique, he was also *morally* bound to do his duty by Millicent.

He supposed, indeed he felt sure that Angelique would be terribly angry were she to find out that he was taking Millicent down to Brighton—that went without saying, of course. And yet, poor

little thing (Millicent was a tall girl really), how wan and pinched she looked, and how wretched she seemed in that bare and dingy little parlour. It was no more than her due that she should have a bit of a change, as any other woman in her condition might want. And, after all, it was not as if Angelique did not know all about Millicent's trouble; even she would hardly grudge her the positive necessaries of life, and he would take care to make it up to her in another way.

With this laudable notion in his mind, Ian Ingram arrived at the door of the restaurant. In a moment Millicent was forgotten, for he was hailed by three or four city men with whom he was on intimate terms, his 'companions in guilt,' as Angelique always called them.

But although city men are in the habit of having very jolly times when they meet together for their midday meal, they do not linger very long after the meal has been disposed of, unless they happen to be doing something in the nature of a deal. On this particular occasion Ian Ingram and his companions separated in time for him to be back in his office as he had arranged with Mr. Johnson.

A good deal of business of one sort or another was awaiting his attention, but he got through it in time to keep his appointment with Angelique.

Perhaps it was the consciousness that he was again wronging her which made him so lavish that day, for he bought several other articles of furniture which took her fancy. Then they drove home together in the cosy little brougham which Angelique used so much more than he did.

'By the bye,' he said, in as casual a tone as he could muster, 'I forgot to tell you before, dearest. I shall be obliged to run down to Brighton to-morrow.'

'To Brighton! Why, what are you going there for?' she asked in a surprised tone.

'I have to see a client on business,' he replied.

'Oh well, so long as you don't want me to go,' she said with a laugh. 'And you'll miss Mrs. Lennox's party.'

'You can go without me.'

'Oh yes, quite well,' she said easily.

Now, as a matter of fact, Mrs. Lennox was by far the most important woman whose acquaintance Angelique had made since her marriage. She bore a magic word in front of her name, and took good care that every one should know it. She was not a little exclusive in her social relations, and was most particular about the people she asked to her house. With Angelique she had quite fallen in love at some afternoon at-home at which they would both have been

bored to death had it not been for the other, and in an almost unheard gush of gratitude she had begged Mrs. Ingram to call upon her. And Angelique had very prettily demurred, saying with a charming mixture of deference and regret, that she was mixed up in a rather city sort of set, and did not think Mrs. Lennox would find any of her friends interesting.

'I, find *you* extremely interesting,' said Mrs. Lennox bluntly, 'and that is the chief thing. So, please, come and see me, my dear—it will give me so much pleasure.'

Thus bidden, Angelique did go to see Mrs. Lennox. She found her alone, and together they sat in a delicate maize-tinted boudoir, and Angelique gradually unfolded the story of her life. Not quite an accurate story, but then how was Mrs. Lennox to know that? Angelique was an adept at telling a story, not actually a lie, yet a good deal wide of the truth. In this case she confided something about Gustav Maynard, only suppressing his name, of how she had suffered, and how cruel all the people at home had been in not allowing her to forget it. She gave Mrs. Lennox a description of the old home at Beech Croft, which would not have been second to Mrs. Dodsworth's loose and idyllic accounts of the old place. And then she told how she had met

Ian Ingram while staying in town, suppressing all about her attempts to become an actress, and keeping the existence of 'Derrick's' carefully in the background. She skilfully drew a sublimated sketch of her husband, touching very lightly on the fact that he was of necessity mixed up in a city set, and lingering with a pretty earnestness on the goodness with which he had treated her; and, in short, drawing such a portrait of Ian, that he would have been genuinely and thoroughly astonished if he could have heard her.

And the result of all this was that Mrs. Lennox patted her indulgently on the arm, and told her that she must drop all her city people as soon as she could, and that she would make her known to a suitable set.

'Of course, *all* city men have to know business men—it's necessary,' Mrs. Lennox wound up, 'but there is nothing to be gained either socially or any other way by visiting exclusively among them. For instance, if your husband wishes to entertain a man on business, that man will think much more of him if he goes to a dinner party at his house and meets no other city people at it.'

'Oh, I am sure you are perfectly right there,' said Angelique. 'I daresay I made awful mis-

takes when I first came to live in town; but I knew no one, and had no one to guide me, and so many people called on me whose names I did not know, and whose style I could not stand, that I felt perfectly miserable. However, this season I weeded a great many of them out. Ian thought I should give great offence, and I daresay I did.'

'Oh yes, I daresay, but it could not matter if such people are offended or not,' said Mrs. Lennox in a tone of unmitigated contempt. 'Indeed, they are better offended than friendly.'

Naturally, Mrs. Lennox returned Angelique's visit in due course; but as she did not call on her regular day, she saw no one excepting the mistress of the pretty house. It happened that Angelique had, when sending out cards a few months previously, bethought her of having some new visiting-cards printed bearing simply the name and address, and omitting the at-home day which her first cards had borne. She had intended these for various persons whom she could not easily drop, and whom she did not wish to be seen at her receptions. Now, however, they came in handy for an exactly opposite purpose to that for which they were intended, and it was one of these which she left upon Mrs. Lennox.

Angelique happened to have just gone upstairs to dress when Mrs. Lennox arrived. 'Let us

have tea as soon as possible, and serve it very carefully,' said Angelique to the parlour maid. 'And send the carriage away for half an hour when it comes, and say "Not at home" to any other callers.'

'Yes, m'm,' said the maid.

Then Angelique went down all in a pretty flutter of pleasure. And Mrs. Lennox having scrutinised the room through her long-handled glasses, and having satisfied herself that there was money, and that the apartment was not overdone with effigies of affectionate relatives, was disposed to be more protectively friendly than ever.

'What made you come out so far?' she asked, when something was said about the distance to the theatres.

Angelique started. 'Well, I really don't know,' she said vaguely. 'We thought the houses seemed nice, and that this part would do as well as any other.'

'Oh, the houses are nice enough, but, of course, the neighbourhood is wholly unfashionable,' said Mrs. Lennox with decision. 'However, I daresay, like a good many other young people, you will be moving by and by.'

'Not just yet,' said Angelique.

It was not until Mrs. Lennox was taking her

leave that she stopped to admire a photograph in a silver frame which stood on the grand piano.

'That is a charming face,' she said.

Angelique flushed with delight. 'That is my dear and sweet, good sister,' she said tenderly.

'Ah! And she lives——?'

'At home, yes. She is a widow.'

'How sad! It is a charming face. I hope you will bring her to see me some time. *Good*-bye; *so* glad to have found you in.'

So Angelique was not altogether sorry when she found that Ian's visit to Brighton would necessitate her going to Mrs. Lennox's evening party by herself. She was by no means anxious to display her little dark-visaged husband under the cold gaze of her new patrician friend. She knew that he would not show off well by comparison with the well-bred men of position with whom Mrs. Lennox was daily accustomed to associate. And, partly from this sense of relief, she let Ian's absence pass without comment, and indeed without thought.

How she enjoyed that party! She wore a new white dress, plain and rich, with a few fine diamonds on her corsage. She was conscious that she was much remarked and greatly admired, and her happiness was brought to a climax when her hostess appeared at her side,

convoying a tall, elderly man of extremely distinguished appearance.

'Let me introduce Sir John Berkeley,' Mrs. Lennox said. 'Sir John, Mrs. Ian Ingram. Take her down to supper, and take great care of her.'

A strange thrill of triumph, which was almost akin to pain, passed through Angelique as Sir John offered her his arm and led her away. His was a name known from one end of the civilised world to the other, a name that was a power in the land, a name to conjure with, a name which was known as that of one of the most distinguished and successful painters of the day. She felt almost shy, and yet very proud.

'This is such a delight to me,' said Sir John, bending down over her, and speaking in a very gallant and impressive voice.

'And why?' asked Angelique, looking up at him with her big, beautiful eyes.

'Why? Because I have been watching you for ever so long, wondering who you were, and how I could get to know you. And then I got hold of Mrs. Lennox, and boldly demanded an introduction.'

'That was very nice of you,' said Angelique prettily. 'And I'm sure I hope you won't be disappointed. I am really a very, very insignifi-

cant person, of no account in the world, and you must know hundreds and hundreds of very much more interesting women than I.'

'I do know some very nice women,' Sir John admitted modestly—'Mrs. Lennox for instance. On my word, I don't know a nicer woman or a dearer in all London than she is.'

And then they talked a little about their hostess, and Angelique told him how inestimably kind Mrs. Lennox had been to her, and what a difference her friendship had made in her life. She confided a little to him also of her society difficulties, and of the trial it was to a girl who had lived all her life in an idyllic place in the country to find her way unscathed among the mazes of a city connection.

'As to the city being a contamination,' said Sir John, 'I must say that is mostly nonsense. Almost everybody is something in the city nowadays, and we painters would do very badly if there were no such place. For myself, I dine with city people about every other night, and they buy my pictures, and enable me to make a decent living.'

'But you wouldn't like them always,' said Angelique.

'Well, no, possibly not, possibly not,' he rejoined easily, then rose to speak to a dowdy old lady

who had stopped by his chair on her way out of the supper-room. Angelique could not hear what they were saying; but as the old lady turned away, he said, 'Good-night, Duchess,' and immediately sat down again as if nothing out of the common had happened.

'Who was that?' Angelique asked.

'The Duchess of Twyford,' Sir John replied. 'She's a dear old lady.'

'Very dowdy,' remarked Angelique.

'Yes, but then she has no need to be anything else,' he said carelessly.

Somehow, the remark, careless as it was, impressed Angelique with a sense of the importance of his position and the strength of his outlook upon the world more than anything else that he could have said. It had never before entered into her calculations that a person could exist so exalted in power and place as to be wholly indifferent to outer appearances and to outside opinion. True, she had never before seen a duchess at close quarters, which may have had something to do with the case.

That evening's acquaintance was the beginning of a close intimacy between Angelique and the famous painter, whose title was a testimony to his value in the eyes of Queen and country. She was so elated by her glimpse into a new world,

that she quite forgot to take more than a passing interest in her husband's trip to the Queen of Watering Places.

'So you're back, dear boy,' she remarked, when Ian Ingram made his appearance the following evening.

'Yes, dearest. And you—are you all right?' he asked.

'Oh yes, dear. Did you have a good time?'

'A good time—h'm! Well, yes, as good as I could have without you.'

'I meant in a business sense, of course,' she said. 'You dined with your client?'

'I did,' he replied, feeling that the term client was an elastic one, and might be stretched as far as was requisite. 'And how did your party go off?'

'Oh, Ian—I *did* have such a good time!' she cried. 'It *was* so swagger, really swagger, you know, with duchesses and such, not just money and show. And I made such a delightful acquaintance—Sir John Berkeley.'

'What, the artist chap?' Ingram asked, with a want of reverence which made Angelique feel quite sick.

'The painter—yes.' For a moment she was too chilled to go on, then her natural buoyancy of spirits began to bubble up again, and she broke out once more.

'He took me in to supper. Oh, I had such a good time. And he is coming to see me soon. And, Ian—don't you think we might give a dinner, not a big one, but a very smart, exclusive thing, not more than twelve people?'

'Well, we might, only—where are you going to get twelve very smart, exclusive people?' Ian Ingram had a peculiarly irritating way of calling a spade a spade, more especially when the implement was one for use in social culture, which sometimes drove his wife to the verge of fury. Angelique, however, on this occasion took him quite seriously.

'Ourselves, two——' she began.

'Ourselves! Speak for yourself, my dear,' he exclaimed, with a laugh.

'Why, what do you mean, Ian? Do you mean you won't come?'

'Oh, no, but can you honestly call me either very smart or very exclusive?'

'Don't be so silly! Ourselves, two—Colonel and Mrs. Lennox, four—Sir John and Gwyn, six. Then there are the Geoffry Hilliards—eight. Now, *don't* look like that, Ian; they *are* smart in their own way, of course they are. She writes novels, and he once ran away with a countess—of course they're smart. They make eight. Then there are the two Lorimer girls, they *are* smart, and

we must have two men. What about Bennet Rogers?'

'Shady beggar; I wouldn't risk it,' said Ian.

'Shady, is he? Oh, then he won't do. Well, there's Major Wilcox.'

'So prosy.'

'True—but still, he is somebody.'

'Ask Clive Egmont; he is not playing just now,' Ian suggested.

'Oh yes, I never thought of him. Yes, actors are *chic*, and Clive Egmont is very good looking. Then we'll ask him. And what about the twelfth—we must have another man? Is there nobody you want to have?'

'A dozen it would be useful to me to ask, but I don't want to spoil your party,' he said, with extreme good nature. 'There's Bernard Rozencratz.'

'Too Jewish.'

'And Frank Barroughby.'

'Too loud. He would want to sing "comic" songs after dinner.'

'Or Mark Marcus.'

'Yes—ye—es. He might do at a pinch, but he certainly is not up to the level of the others.'

Finally, they decided that Mr. Marcus would pass muster; and having settled one or two fur-

ther points, Ian Ingram went off to business, mightily relieved in his mind to find that his wife had not been more desirous of knowing exactly how, where, and with whom he had passed the few hours of his absence from town.

CHAPTER XIV

THAT dinner-party, her first smart and exclusive dinner-party, was the cause of much anxious thought and cogitation to Angelique. She felt that it was the wisest step that she could take in fostering her acquaintance with Mrs. Lennox. She knew that she could not long keep Ian in the background; that sooner or later he would have to make the acquaintance of her new friend. Instinct told her that the meeting had better take place in the evening, for Ian looked better in evening clothes than in any other attire. Then, too, it would be better that it should be in his own house, where he would show to far greater advantage than anywhere else.

She sent out the invitations that morning, allowing an interval of a little more than three weeks. And she wrote to Gwyn and ordered her to come up for the great event, not a little to Mrs. Dodsworth's chagrin and disgust.

Truly, it was more than Mrs. Dodsworth could understand that Gwyn should be bidden to such an entertainment, while she was entirely left out of it. It was in vain that Gwyn explained that probably Angelique had thought she would not care about a dinner at which the entire company would be total strangers to her; it was in vain that she suggested the possibility that she had not liked to ask her without Mr. Dodsworth, and that her number was complete without him. It was all of no use, Mrs. Dodsworth was offended, and bitterly so, and made many sarcastic and stinging remarks as to the trials of daughters who were saddled with quite impossible parents ignorant of the ordinary conventionalities of life.

'I'm quite sure Angel had no such thought as that,' said Gwyn, who knew perfectly well why Angelique had not invited her mother on this particular occasion, 'but I will write and tell Angel that I cannot make it convenient to go.'

'Not at all. I wish you to go. I wish to hear all about it, and you had better have a new dress for the occasion,' said Mrs. Dodsworth sharply.

So Gwyn duly went to town, and Mrs. Dodsworth spent the time both before and after the day fixed for the party in talking over the great event. It happened the very day before Gwyn left home that Angelique's old enemy, Mrs. Williams,

arrived for the purpose of making a formal call on her friend.

'Gwyn goes to town to-morrow,' Mrs. Dodsworth remarked, when she had supplied Mrs. Williams with tea and cake and the latest bit of news which had transpired in Beech Croft.

'Really? Dear me, how young people do gad about, to be sure,' said Mrs. Williams.

'Angelique is giving a great dinner-party next week,' Mrs. Dodsworth went on, not taking the smallest notice of Mrs. Williams' shaft about gadding.

'Oh, a dinner-party.'

'Yes—it is to be a very smart affair, quite the best people in London, among them the great painter, Sir John Berkeley.'

Mrs. Williams was visibly impressed; and before she could think of anything sufficiently *àpropos* to say, Mrs. Dodsworth meandered aimlessly on—

'Of course, Angelique is in the very best society,' she continued, 'and this is not even an ordinary affair, but something very exclusive indeed. She would have Gwyn go up for it.'

'Dear me, I wonder she left you out,' snapped Mrs. Williams, who had been to London several times since Angelique's marriage, but had never been asked within her doors.

'I!' echoed Mrs. Dodsworth, with an air which

would have done justice to an actress of the first rank. 'Oh, my dear Mrs. Williams, old women like you and me are better away from that kind of thing. Gwyn is young, and enjoys a little change, and Angelique saw the good sense of my wishing Gwyn to go rather than of my doing so.'

'I daresay you think Gwyn may be picking up another husband,' remarked Mrs. Williams, feeling that her poison-tipped arrow had flown wide of the mark.

'Gwyn—well, do you know, I hope with all my heart that Gwyn will never marry again. She was not happy or fortunate before, and she might do even worse again. I'm afraid Gwyn is of that type which in a measure courts ill-treatment and neglect, though it seems incredible to me that a daughter of mine should be unhappy in her marriage. Still, if Gwyn were to meet with another Ian Ingram, I would give my consent with pleasure. Ah, Mrs. Williams, such a husband! He lives to give Angelique happiness. That dear man has not any thought in his mind that is not bounded by Angelique. Nobody will ever truly know the chivalry and single-heartedness of Ian Ingram.'

'But you know it,' remarked Mrs. Williams.

'I? Ah, yes, but then he regards me differently to any one else in the world. I sometimes

think he encourages Angelique in all kinds of extravagances and foolishness. Only the last time I was there I said to him that she had far too much of her own way. Why, my dear Mrs. Williams, she actually persisted in having the hall and staircase repapered and painted, although it was all new less than two years ago, and just because it struck her as chilly looking when she went in. I said to Ian, "Really, my dear boy, you ought not to encourage it. It is wicked waste to paper and paint again." But, as he said, "Well, Mother dear, if Angelique wants it, it's no use my saying anything, Angelique must have it." And then he shrugged his shoulders and looked quite piteously at me, as if he would ask me to protect him.'

'From Angelique?' interposed Mrs. Williams drily.

'From his own good nature, from his inability to say No to any of her wishes,' returned Mrs. Dodsworth with dignity.

Now, as a matter of fact, Ian Ingram had never called Mrs. Dodsworth otherwise than by her name in his life; and her recital of this particular conversation was so erroneous, that certainly neither Mr. nor Mrs. Ian Ingram would have known it again had it been repeated to them. True, Ian Ingram did not care to

discuss his wife with any one, not even with her own mother; but a man better able to say No, a man better able to manage his own affairs, and better able to secure his pound of flesh than he, would have been hard to find. Israel Isaacs had been long accounted, even among his own kind, as an Israelite of the Israelites. In taking the name of Ian Ingram he had carried with him precisely the same disposition which he had borne aforetime as Israel Isaacs!

Angelique's smart and exclusive dinner-party went off very well. For one awful moment after Colonel and Mrs. Lennox arrived, she felt that the host had proved to be somewhat of a shock; but as the excellent dinner progressed, and the still more excellent wines began to have their effect, Angelique was conscious that the worst was over, and that he was making quite a good impression on the guest of the evening.

Angelique herself was very happy. Sir John had taken her in to dinner, and Colonel Lennox sat on her other hand. She was indeed a proud woman, and looked radiantly happy and extremely handsome. Angelique was not a young woman who looked handsome under all circumstances, by no means indeed. She had ever a certain style and *chic* of her own, always the

same wealth of sunshiny bright hair, always the same wide-open, inquiring grey eyes; but her face was one which showed fatigue, annoyance, distress, and indeed any emotion or sensation, as plainly as a barometer indicates the state of the weather, and it was only when her mental balance pointed to 'set fair' that she gave the impression of being a singularly handsome woman.

Gwyn sat on Sir John's left hand, and Colonel Lennox had taken the lady whose husband had once run away with a countess. The rest of the company were paired off as seemed most suitable to Angelique's judgment.

It was certainly a success. Mrs. Lennox said a civil thing or two to the lady novelist, and spoke of her last book sufficiently to make her believe that she had read it. She had not done so, but she had seen a paragraph about it in some lady's journal, and having an excellent memory—as all true society people have—she used her bit of information with the best possible effect. Then she had a little talk with Gwyn, told her how charmed she was with her sister, and begged her to come and see her very soon indeed. After that she dropped a few judicious words of praise into Angelique's ear anent the excellence and smoothness of the dinner, and

almost immediately after the men came in from the dining-room melted quietly away, carrying her colonel with her.

'So very sorry to go, my dear,' she whispered to Angelique, 'but I promised Lady Theo most faithfully not to be later than eleven, and it is close on that time now. Good-bye—good-bye.'

It was rather a blow to Angelique, but still she had had the glory of entertaining her, and Sir John showed no signs of desiring to move. He attached himself unmistakably to her, and the man who had once run away with a countess offered to sing something, and sang the newest comic song in the most pronouncedly music-hall style, to Sir John's evident delight.

'Dear—dear—what a pity Mrs. Lennox did not stay to hear this!' he chuckled to Angelique, who in her heart was unspeakably thankful that Mrs. Lennox was safely out of the house; 'she simply revels in this sort of thing. You must give a little afternoon, and get your friend to come and sing us all his newest songs. I must get you to let me bring the Duchess——'

'What, the old lady who spoke to you the other night?' Angelique asked in amazement.

'Oh, no, that was the Duchess of Twyford. I meant the young Duchess of Sevenoaks. She'll

nail him for her next big crush to a certainty, and tell every one she paid him fifty guineas for coming.'

'Oh, you are chaffing me,' cried Angelique.

'On my soul, I'm not. Look here, get that good fellow to fix a date now—and only ask a few people.'

'Why a few?'

'Oh, a few are so much nicer, and it makes those who are asked think so much more of it. You ask any one and every one to a crush.'

'I don't think the Duchess of Sevenoaks would feel flattered at my asking her however I did it,' said Angelique, laughing outright.

'I'll bring her. If she *is* fixed up—but she won't be—at least, she will throw over anything to suit herself; I'll give a little party in my studio——'

'Oh! I should like to see your studio,' Angelique burst out.

'You shall do that in any case, of course,' said Sir John in his impressive way, just as if he and his studio were equally and irrevocably at Mrs. Ian Ingram's service.

And Angelique did get Mr. Galbraith to fix a date then and there on which she might give a small and very select afternoon party, whereat he would sing all his newest songs. Mr.

Galbraith was a man who loved to show himself independently of his wife's position as a novelist. He had done many things in the hope of gaining notoriety, both before and after his marriage to the famous Miss Danelli, and in most instances his attempts had been more or less abortive. Starting life with a modest private fortune, he had tried the militia, a varsity, the stage, and running away with a countess. The militia had not proved quite as easy an opening to the regular service as he had been led to believe; at Brasenose he had somehow failed to find his social level, while he had but too surely found his intellectual level at the very bottom; the stage had rejected him with ignominy after he had done six months in a certain celebrated provincial company, better known among 'pro-pros' as 'The Crêche.' And the countess had, long before the Divorce Court had set her free to enter into new matrimonial schemes, taken so appallingly to drink and bad language, that he had no inducement to figure before the world in yet another character—that of a man of honour. So he and the *ci-devant* countess parted company, with relief on one side, and many recriminations and objurgations on the other. And for a time he had floated around the bye-ways of that curious mixture which we call

London Society wholly and solely on the strength of the fact that he was the man who had run away with Lady Desborough.

It was this fact that had won him the hand of the famous Miss Danelli. And she was famous, for her novels were remarkable for their vivid portrayals of unadulterated lust and passion. Old-fashioned mothers forbade any novel by Miss Danelli to be brought into their houses; young matrons read them, but stuffed them under the sofa cushions instead of laying them down on the nearest table; men quoted them to the women with whom they wanted to be on terms of careless and familiar ease; everybody who was anybody wanted to see the author of *Twin Souls;* but only a small minority cared to make her acquaintance, and nobody seemed desperately anxious to marry her.

Then Willy Galbraith got to know her, and the two notorieties were mutually attracted. Yet, although he was very much in love with his wife, the marriage was not a little of a disappointment to Willy Galbraith, for his notoriety as 'Miss Danelli's husband' was a very much less pronounced one than he had imagined it would be. So Willy Galbraith was ready and willing to take up any line which would give him a place of his own, and take him from under the

shadow of his wife's wing, without disturbing the amicability of their relations to each other. Angelique dropped a vague hint about the possibility of the Duchess coming, though she did not herself believe it for a single moment. Still, she felt that Mrs. Lennox and Sir John were indisputable facts such as could not be gainsaid.

And, after all, the Duchess did not come. She wrote a characteristic note to Sir John expressive of the most intense regret at her inability to avail herself of Mrs. Ingram's invitation. He showed her the note:—

'DEAR SIR JOHN,' it said, 'to my disgust, I cannot manage anyhow to come. We have got to go to Windsor to dine with the Old Lady; and if one isn't in good time, or misses the train, one would come in for all sorts of horrors. The Duke says in his circumstances we must be extra careful, and run no risk. Tell your friend Mrs. Ingram how utterly sorry I am, and say I hope to have a chance later on. I *love* coster songs.—Ever yours, ELIZABETH SEVENOAKS.'

'What are his circumstances?' Angelique asked.

'He is Master of the Horse.'

'Oh.' For a moment she was vexed at having so plainly shown her ignorance, then she looked

up at him with an enchanting smile. 'I shall never know all these things,' she said with charming frankness. 'I'm sure duchesses and I will never amalgamate.'

'Oh, you and she will mix right enough,' said Sir John, who set no particular store by duchesses. To him they were purely ornamental; his most useful friends were to be found in the city.

But the little party was a great success, as great a success as the dinner had been, and the fame of Mrs. Ian Ingram's newly acquired exclusiveness soon began to spread itself abroad among the tribes of the faithful. Still, it must be owned that on the whole she did not lose by it, and Ian Ingram found himself daily taking a different and a better position among his compeers in the city.

And the Duchess did make her appearance about a fortnight later at a little party given in Sir John's studio, a little party at which Willy Galbraith sang seven or eight times, and received as much adulation as if he had been at least a Paderewski, a party at which Angelique was specially introduced to the great Lady as the one to whom she owed this especial treat.

'And it was you who found out Willy Galbraith,' said the Duchess bluntly, 'you lucky woman. I should be off my head almost if I could trot

round and call a new star mine. But then I am not lucky.'

The thought which flashed into Angelique's mind was that of a certainty some people are never satisfied. Here was a young woman, none too good-looking, who had won the biggest prize in the matrimonial stakes, but who yet evidently was in the habit of speaking of and thinking of herself as an unlucky person. Truly, life is a very curious study.

CHAPTER XV

THE friendship between Angelique and Sir John Berkeley grew and throve apace. To Angelique it was particularly sweet, and helped to gloss over the pain left by Ian Ingram's defections as perhaps nothing else would have done. With him and through him she went to many places which in the past had been sealed to her. Many very smart and exclusive ladies who would never have looked at Ian Ingram's wife were glad enough to know Sir John Berkeley's latest friend; and many others, who would have sniffed at her as Sir John Berkeley's friend, were extremely glad to hold out the hand of friendship to any one who was vouched for by such a very smart and exclusive woman as Mrs. Lennox.

And yet, Angelique was not altogether prosperous in her relations to society; she yearned more and more after duchesses and such large game; though when she did find herself hob-

nobbing with them, she was, on the whole, miserably uncomfortable. She was always haunted by a feeling that she was only tolerated for Sir John's sake, and that if any one of these great ladies chanced to catch sight of the little Jewish husband in the background, that one would immediately take fright, and a thick line in red chalk would soon be found in the titled engagement book. At times an intense longing came over her that she should be bidden to these ladies' homes by right, and not as a matter of toleration; and there were moments when she regretted her marriage with a fierce impotent regret so strong that it threatened more than once completely to overwhelm her. For Sir John was a slave to her, he pitied her more than words could express, openly speaking of her as a deeply wronged and ill-used woman, cast like pearls before swine, and entirely unappreciated by the little Israelite to whom she had entrusted her life.

'However,' he said to her one day, when they had just arranged to go to Ascot together, 'there is one alleviating circumstance in your lot, Ingram is good-natured in letting you go your own way and in giving you a free hand; it would be very different if he were of an exacting and jealous turn, and would not let you out of his sight.'

'Oh, Ian occupies himself with other gods,' cried Angelique bitterly. 'So long as I will entertain his city interests now and again, he is happier when I am out of his way.'

'That is impossible,' said Sir John promptly.

'Not at all. You would think it would be impossible that my husband could——' She had been on the point of adding 'look at my servant,' but prudently broke the end of the sentence off sharp and looked at Sir John with her wide-open, lovely eyes, contrition plainly expressed in every line of her speaking face. 'I ought not to have said that,' she exclaimed in penitent tones. 'After all, Ian has been very good to me. If he is not *quite* perfect—well, who is? Perhaps I expect too much of him.'

The painter caught her hand in his and held it hard for a minute. 'Angelique,' he said huskily, 'you are a noble woman; you can still find an excuse for him who systematically and shamefully neglects you. My dear, my dear, it is cruel to think that you have been thrown away upon such a man. Angelique—Angelique—if only we had met a little sooner—if only I could make up to you for all that is wanting in your life. Oh, Angelique, if only you were free.'

An idea shot into Angelique's mind—she sat stunned and paralysed by the immensity of the

possibility which the future held out to her at that moment. Gently she tried to draw her hand away, but Sir John held it fast within his own, and looked at her with his handsome face all alight with love and quivering with emotion. 'My dear—my dear,' he said, 'Fate is very cruel to us,' and then he bent his courtly grey head and kissed the hand he held with an air of devotion, as he might have kissed the hem of a saint's garment.

Long after he had left her, Angelique sat there silent and preoccupied. Wild and angry thoughts went fleeting swiftly through her brain, thoughts that seemed to chase one another aimlessly like bats at night. And above all one burden rang—one regret—one echo of all the past pain of her life—why, why, had this great chance of happiness come to her too late? If only she had known of this when she had found out the truth about Millicent, she might by this time have been a free woman, free, and able to become Sir John Berkeley's wife, safe for ever in the one sphere to which by nature she belonged.

From that day Angelique looked upon Sir John Berkeley with a different eye. He was no longer her slave, her favourite 'man,' the stepping-stone to a smarter 'swim' than she had ever before found herself in. No, he was *the* possibility of

the future, in his hands lay the making or marring of her whole life; for if she should ever find herself Lady Berkeley, she would be at once at the top of the tree, secure against all future storms, safe in a shelter which would be at once congenial and delightful.

If only she could successfully get rid of Ian Ingram!

Never for a single moment did any idea of herself breaking the bond between them arise in Angelique's busy mind. She had no passion to battle against. Hers was a cold nature which put worldly before personal considerations always; and in thinking of Sir John as a possible husband for herself, she was moved wholly and solely by the worldly advantages that would accrue to her from such an alliance. Therefore, it never occurred to her to curb any of those desires and extravagances which come into the lives of all women who are bent upon getting into a higher sphere than that to which they are entitled by birth or marriage. Ian Ingram was inclined to hold his peace and let her take her own pace, and Angelique saw no reason why the pace should not be a brisk one.

At this time she did not have much intercourse with the home people. Mrs. Dodsworth fretted and worried not a little; but Angelique had from

the very first trained her relations not to make an hotel of her house, and only to go there when they were invited, so Mrs. Dodsworth's fretting and worrying did not count for very much. Angelique had now plenty of smart people to make up her dinner-parties, and had no need to bring Gwyn up from the country for the purpose of filling a chair with her gentle presence. And of a surety Angelique went the pace—and that pace a brisk one. There were people in the Jewish community who wondered not a little that Ian Ingram was able to live as he did, to allow his wife to dress like a great lady of fashion, to give dinners and parties of all kinds, to let money pour out like water on every hand. But Ian Ingram himself seemed to notice nothing, he expressed no fears, uttered no warnings, never attempted in the smallest degree to slip the drag on the wheels of the matrimonial chariot.

Nor was the reason far to seek—no further, indeed, than a little box of a house in naughty North Bank, where the whilom parlour maid, Millicent Page, lived in semi-retirement, and was called 'Mrs. Desmond.'

The house in naughty North Bank was convenient, but it was very expensive; its rent was within a few pounds of the more commodious residence just across the broad road which

marks out the highly respectable district of Maida Vale from the questionable shades of St. John's Wood. The secluded bit of garden was beautifully kept up, for Millicent had developed a very pretty taste in floriculture; the house was very well tended by a couple of neat maid-servants; but the modesty of this part of the establishment was supplemented by a severely haughty white-garbed person who lived upstairs, and who might have been seen any fine morning or afternoon in charge of a luxurious baby carriage painted and upholstered entirely in white, and occupied by a little person who was ordinarily spoken of as 'Miss Baby.' Occasionally Millicent herself went out with Miss Baby and the haughty attendant, but this did not happen often. Ian Ingram had no fancy for a furious scene with Angelique, or for bringing his legitimate establishment to a sudden end. He still lived in hopes of a son born in wedlock, a little Ian Ingram, who would one day take his place in the world, and reap the full benefit of having had the advantage of a Christian mother. So, for this reason, Ian Ingram was content to let Angelique go her own way, more especially as she seemed perfectly and equally contented to let him go his.

Angelique at this time did not trouble her

husband much for ready money. Indeed, her crop of debts had got so large that it was a comparatively easy matter for her to live upon herself—or upon them. It would be hard to say whether she had at this time any adequate realisation that a day would come sooner or later in which these debts would have to be paid. She went on the principle of having anything that she wished for in the present and of letting the future take care of itself. When she was hard pressed for money she had recourse to various means of getting it. She would intimate in an offhand and casual kind of way to Ian that he might let her have some money. She always spoke in a quite careless way, as if his compliance was a matter of the most absolute indifference to her. Usually this had the effect of drawing twenty or twenty-five pounds from Ian Ingram's pockets, and was but a drop in the ocean of Angelique's liabilities. Once or twice he had to put her off, on which occasions Angelique always said in her most slighting manner, 'Oh, don't put yourself out over it. If it's not convenient to you, I'll tell my people to wait.'

She always did tell her 'people' to wait, as a matter of principle. Sometimes she doled out a cheque for ten or twenty pounds, when she invariably ordered more things so as to keep

them in good temper, but she never made such doles until she could no longer put off the evil day. But there are times in the lives of all traders, even the most distinguished in the West End, when large bills must be reduced; and when Angelique found herself face to face with such emergencies as these, and Ian was not inclined to pay down handsomely without asking any questions, she had need to fly to more desperate subterfuges. Once she took the whole of her jewellery to a great establishment for the manufacturing of diamonds 'warranted impossible of detection,' and she had exact copies made of every article of value that she was possessed of. They were not many, but they were good—a single-stone diamond necklace, a set of five diamond stars, a pretty thing in the shape of a high comb for the hair, set with diamonds and several large pearls, half a dozen brooches, and eight or nine handsome rings. The entire lot of duplicates cost her fifty pounds, and she sold the originals for four hundred and fifty pounds, thus leaving a surplus of four hundred pounds after defraying the cost of the imitation substitutes for her jewels. That four hundred pounds served Angelique in good stead, and enabled her to keep her credit at high-water mark for quite a long time. It is astonishing, if you happen to have a

fine flourishing crop of debts, what a sum like four hundred pounds judiciously meted out will do towards staving them off. Angelique found this so, and went on spending more extravagantly than ever! There were times in Ian Ingram's life when he fairly opened his eyes in surprise at the way in which Millicent Page had taken to her position as mistress of the little house in North Bank, when he could hardly believe that the quiet, elegant, and ultra-dignified Mrs. Desmond had ever handed his plates at dinner, and worn the cap and apron which were the badge and token of servitude. But any strides which Millicent had made towards a life of luxury with ease and accustomedness had been far surpassed by Angelique's feats in that direction.

Angelique had long ago come to regard two hundred a year as a perfectly preposterous and impossible sum upon which to dress, and spent three or four times that amount with the greatest composure, feeling indeed that Ian ought to be highly gratified that his wife was a woman able and willing to exercise unheard-of economies.

Nor was dress Angelique's chiefest cause of outlay. She was free and lavish in many other directions. Besides making a collection of old

china, she had started a silver table. Now a silver table is a very costly business in which to indulge, and Angelique was not one to begin such a fad without doing it well. Her silver table was the envy and admiration of all her acquaintances, and many were the pilgrimages which she and Sir John made to all sorts of strange out-of-the-way places in search of new treasures for the enrichment of her collection. Some of her most precious pieces were gifts from him, but others were 'finds' of her own which she had picked up by way of letting him see what a clever and discriminating bric-a-brac hunter she was; and these finds of Angelique's were not usually remarkable for their cheapness. She loved to make what she called 'little presents' to her friends—a fan here, a posy of fresh flowers there, a big palm in a smart pot for a birthday, a box for a theatre out of sheer friendliness. All these things gave Angelique a certain weight and importance in her set, but they cost money, and helped her bills to run up marvellously.

Some women would have troubled about them —not so Angelique. She floated on her way apparently untroubled by her liabilities. Indeed, if the truth be told, there was only one thing that did worry her at this time, which was the

fact that she was married to Ian Ingram. With every day that went over her head she felt more and more that Sir John Berkeley was the only man in the whole world who could give her all that she wanted; she felt that he was the only one who could make her happy, and free her from the taint of the City and the shackles of her Jewish marriage. She grew to hate and detest every shade and clan of the Israelitish community with a hatred which was the most intense feeling she had ever experienced, and she longed to be rid of Ian and his set, of the house in Maida Vale, and all the associations of her married life, with a feverish restlessness, which was a thousand times as great as that with which she had once longed to shake off the shackles of her mother and her home life. She always felt when she found herself in Sir John's beautiful studio as if she had got home after wandering. She always felt when with him a sense of rest and peace such as she knew at no other time. And yet Angelique was not in the very smallest degree in love with Sir John Berkeley, and would not have compromised herself with him for all the riches of the Orient. Whatever her faults, weaknesses, and failings, without doubt Angelique Ingram's passions were held well in check.

CHAPTER XVI

THE season came to an end, and time went on. Angelique had been married more than two years, and everything between her and Ian seemed to be fairly tranquil. But it was only that calm which immediately precedes a storm. Ian's complacency was caused by two circumstances—firstly, the fact that he did not know of the money Angelique was spending; secondly, by a certain amount of shame at the thought of the maisonette in naughty North Bank.

Shame, did I say? Well, that word scarcely describes the feeling. It was rather a latent sense of compunction, a realisation of the fact that he had deliberately tricked Angelique, a sort of self-blame that Millicent's child had lived and Angelique's had, owing to no fault of her own, been born dead. Ian Ingram was not a man who would have denied himself one jot of pleasure or the gratification of a single appetite; but he cer-

tainly did, out of that curious notion of wrong-doing, give Angelique ten times as much rope as he would have done under any ordinary circumstances.

Autumn passed over without anything unusual happening. Angelique went to Aix-les-Bains, and thence to Switzerland, travelling with a friend, and meeting Sir John Berkeley at various places on the way. Ian Ingram went to Scotland, carrying Mrs. Desmond with him.

It seems odd that such a man should ever wish to go to Scotland, and more odd that he should want to take a woman of Mrs. Desmond's class to such a cold and dour country, among such a straight-laced and austere people. She said that she enjoyed it, and perhaps she did, though it seems unlikely on the face of it. Then when the autumn was far advanced, and Angelique found herself back at the house in Maida Vale, ready to get through the early winter season, something happened to disturb the everyday current of events.

For by a strange chance it came about that Angelique, going one day to the view of a sale of curios, came face to face with Ian Ingram, who was escorting Mrs. Desmond, better known to Angelique as the ex-parlour maid, Millicent Page.

It had happened in this way. Millicent had

been especially anxious to go to this particular sale, for she too, like her betters, had her collecting fads. Old lace was one of them, and snuff-boxes another. So far as the old lace was concerned, it was a harmless fad enough, and Millicent was the proud possessor of a few scraps of yellow old lace which she had picked up cheap, and of whose authenticity even she was doubtful. The other fad was a more serious matter; snuff-boxes, like old silver, run into money; and Millicent, though very careful how she trod the thorny path of life under the protection of Ian Ingram, was distinctly of a grasping and rapacious nature. At first Ian had declared it impossible that he could go with her to the sale. From the very beginning of their setting up house together he had exercised great care in going about with Millicent, having no wish for an *esclandre* on her account. Then he remembered, or rather Millicent reminded him of it, that it was Angelique's at home day, and in consequence therefore she was not likely to be out.

Angelique, however, had become much more offhand of late in her dealings with society, and when, after luncheon, Sir John Berkeley came hurrying in, bringing with him the news of this wonderful sale, she determined to leave a pretty message for any possible callers, and to gratify

herself by going with Sir John to see how much more money she might be able to get rid of. And almost the first person that she saw was her quondam parlour maid Millicent Page, dressed like a fashion plate, and walking along with a very proprietorial air beside her husband, Ian Ingram! Mistress and ex-maid met in the crush of one of those crowds when people are for a minute or two wedged up together and cannot move one way or another. For one awful moment Angelique stared with her wide-open indignant eyes straight into Millicent's face. Then she turned round to Sir John and said, in a terribly distinct voice, 'Will you be kind enough to take me home? *This* is no place for me.'

He had her out of the crowd and into the carriage in less than no time. 'I may come with you?' he asked, in his most deferential tones.

Angelique turned her head, her eyes were blazing fiercely, and a brilliant red spot flamed on either cheek. 'Oh yes, please do. Don't desert me just now when I've had such a crushing blow as this.'

Sir John got quietly into the carriage after giving the direction 'Home' to the coachman. 'Angelique,' he said, 'who was that lady? Why has the sight of her made you so angry?'

'That—*lady*,' said Angelique bitterly, 'was once my parlour maid—my servant. Her name is Millicent Page. She murdered my poor little child. She is Ian's mistress.'

'What are you going to do?'

'To do? Listen to me, Sir John; I never told you before, but that woman is my—*rival*,' with a bitter laugh—'my rival with my own husband. I forgave it once, for I had not been married a year, and I was anxious to get on with him if I could. But he was or seemed so penitent—so anxious to avoid anything like a breach, and he was apparently so anxious to do everything to please me, and he promised to give her up for good and all; he swore that she had never been anything but a—but a—convenience to him.' She bent her head until he could scarcely see her face, only the shamed blush which stained one burning cheek.

'The fellow's a sweep—a bad hat—he can't help it,' said Sir John curtly. 'But what are you going to do?'

'I don't know—I'm a miserable woman. I suppose I shall have to go back and swallow my pride and my sense of outraged decency as best I can,' Angelique replied brokenly. 'I have nobody to stand by me, nobody to see me through it. My father and mother are old-fashioned

people, who don't understand such tragedies as these; they would say at once that it must of necessity be mostly, if not all, my fault. The only brother who would be of the smallest use to me is on the other side of the world. I am perfectly helpless; I have absolutely nobody to stand by me in all the world.'

'Angelique,' said Sir John, taking her hand and holding it firmly in his own, 'you are mistaken in one thing. You have one friend who is ready and willing to stand by you through thick and thin! You don't surely suppose that after we have been such friends—you and I—I would desert you at a time when you have been betrayed by the man who ought to think it his proudest privilege to cherish and protect you?'

'I—I—you are very good,' said Angelique, in a very humble tone. 'I—I don't know how to thank you enough, Sir John. But I have to think of the future—I cannot live on nothing—and I would rather die than go home again to that narrow, cramped provincial life—I—I——'

'The future shall be my care,' said Sir John briefly. 'The only question for you to decide now is whether you will go back or not.'

'I would rather die,' Angelique flashed out, then bent her head and burst into a passion of tears.

The result of it all was that when, having got rid of Millicent, Ian Ingram went home that he might face Angelique and get the worst over, he found her sitting in the hall watching her boxes being taken out of the house.

'Hullo, what's the meaning of this?' he asked blankly.

'Only that I am going to make way for the other one' returned Angelique promptly; 'you did not expect to find me dressing for dinner, did you?'

'But you are not going away?' in an astonished tone.

'Of course, I am. I overlooked your affair with that creature once, but not a second time—oh, no.'

'What are you going to do?' he asked blankly.

'That you will hear soon enough from my lawyers,' replied Angelique, in a voice of ice.

'Your lawyers—what—you're going to extremes?'

'You will hear in good time,' she said, with a sneer.

'But—but you got over it before——'

'And relied on your word that you had done with the creature, that she was nothing to you,' Angelique cried, in a scoffing tone. 'And the greater fool I to do it. I might have known

better than to trust the honour of a—*Jew!* I should have asked for your bond, *your written bond.*'

'I had a duty to her,' he broke out.

'To her—then keep it—fulfil it. She is welcome to all that you can do for her now. Perhaps, by and by, you will even be able to make an honest woman of her—when I have quite done with you.'

For a moment there was intense silence between them. Angelique stood facing her husband, a cold sneer on her death-pale face. Through Ian Ingram's mind there raced a hundred different thoughts, consternation and fury uppermost of all in that he had been fool enough to compromise himself by going to so public a place with Millicent. He realised that all was over between himself and Angelique; that this elegant, imperious Christian woman would have no part nor lot in his future life; that he would be openly disgraced before his whole race, his own people. Then he thought, by one of those strange freaks which move us at the most unlikely times, of the difference between the two—between Millicent and Angelique—of how the one had been all fire and half-veiled contempt and arrogance, the other meek, satisfied, and full of clinging affection; he thought in that bitter moment of how the one had

borne a living, and the other a dead child; and then a great rush of passion and mad anger overcame him, and he turned almost before he knew what he was doing, and struck Angelique across the face. 'There's your cruelty,' he said brutally; 'now you have your case complete.'

It happened that Angelique's maid came down the stairs just as the blow fell. Angelique staggered back, catching at the nearest chair for support. 'You saw that, Rosine?' she said, in a shaking voice to the woman.

'Yes, ma'am, I'm sorry to say I did,' was the quick reply. 'Come let me take you away; this is no place for you.'

She took Angelique by the arm and led her out to the brougham, which was still waiting.

'Keep up, ma'am, don't give way,' she murmured soothingly. 'It's hard to bear, but it's no good to give way.'

So Angelique, with that livid mark of shame across her fair face, passed, supported by her maid, out of her husband's house for ever. But in her heart of hearts there was no shame and but little anger, for the Fates had played into her hands just as she had hoped they would do, and everything had fallen out as perfectly as if she had planned it.

CHAPTER XVII

IT is a comparatively easy matter to get a divorce when you have a clear case to carry into Court. The day after the fatal meeting between Angelique and Millicent, Sir John Berkeley took Mrs. Ian Ingram to his own lawyers. The members of the firm, who managed such cases, heard the details with grave attention, and remarked, it must be admitted with a certain air of disappointment—

'A simple case! Mr. Ingram will hardly trouble to defend it.'

'What do you mean by a *simple* case?' Angelique asked rather indignantly. To her there was no simplicity in the matter at all.

The astute man of law smiled. 'I mean that—from our point of view—it is not likely to be an interesting case, a *cause célèbre!* You have the whole of the necessary evidence ready-made, all cut and dried. Your husband will hardly trouble to defend it. It can only be a question of waiting a few months.'

'I see what you mean,' said Angelique, with a grave air of dignity. 'But although it may be very disappointing for you to have to take up a case which is quite simple and not likely to be interesting, I have *no* desire, I can assure you, to be the heroine of a *cause célèbre*. I am only too thankful that it is a simple case.'

'My dear madam,' said the man of law, 'you mistake me entirely. I only meant to convey that it would be a case involving no trouble; that it is all clear from the beginning. We shall have great pleasure in carrying it through, but the end is a foregone conclusion—it is merely a question of time.'

Now, that was precisely the truth. Angelique found that it was not possible to do anything till the following sessions, and that even then she would have to take her fair turn with any similar cases that might be waiting. And when the trial had come and gone, there would still be the painful and dangerous period of waiting until the *decree nisi* should be made absolute. So the best part of a year would be gone before there was the very smallest possibility of her being transformed into Lady Berkeley.

She felt that she would have to live very quietly, very circumspectly, and very warily until

she had really obtained her freedom, or she might lose the great chance of her life. And as she was fully determined to let nothing, short of death, come in between her and Sir John Berkeley, she laid down the lines of her life so as to live in such a manner as would be above reproach in the eyes of the whole world.

On leaving her husband's house she had taken up her quarters at a quiet hotel for the night; and as soon as she had seen the lawyers and made sure that her chance of winning her case was a good one, she set about looking for nice rooms in a quiet part of the town, and having found them, she then telegraphed for Gwyn to come to her at once.

Not a little to her dismay, Gwyn arrived in company with Mrs. Dodsworth, who held forth on the subject of Angelique's trouble, until Angelique was almost driven out of her mind with irritation and the despair of having another quiet moment till all was over.

'My dear Mother,' she said at last, 'It's of no use your ragging it all over and explaining it, or even your talking about it. Ian chose to take my parlour maid Millicent, and to put her in a different capacity in a smart maisonette in St. John's Wood. There's a regular establishment kept up, and a baby and all that. Ian was kind

enough to me until I found out about this creature, and then he struck me across the face. Now, you know everything that there is to know.'

'But it seems impossible to me,' Mrs. Dodsworth persisted, sitting in an attitude of helpless dejection, and gazing with vague pathos at Angelique, 'that any man, especially Ian, who was so devoted to me, could treat a daughter of mine in such a way as that.'

Angelique laughed outright. 'Oh, my dear Mother, what earthly difference can my being a daughter of yours make in such a matter as this? What has being your daughter ever done for me? The fact that I was your daughter did not keep my first love true to me, nor make me a success on the stage, nor did it, nor was it at all likely to prevent Ian from making love to one of my own servants.'

'I cannot understand it,' said Mrs. Dodsworth, looking round with a childlike air of confusion and lack of understanding, such as sat strangely on her ample and matronly person.

'Well, then, don't try; don't think about it at all,' rejoined Angelique, fast losing any semblance of patience. 'It was a pity you came up; I asked Gwyn to come, not you.'

'Your telegram sounded like trouble,' said Mrs.

Dodsworth, seeking for her handkerchief, while her large face underwent many curious and pathetic contortions, 'and who should come if you were in trouble but your own mother? I am sure I came with the very best and kindest intentions, Angelique, and you only snap at me. It's very hard on me to have my daughter suddenly turned out of her beautiful home and——'

'Yes, yes, Mother, I know all that,' said Angelique, trying hard to be patient and forbearing. 'But you mustn't forget that the shock of the whole affair has been simply appalling to me. Two days ago I had no more idea of anything happening between Ian and me than I had of anything happening between you and Dad. As to being turned out of my house, he didn't go so far as that, or even wish me to go. He struck me because he saw that I meant going, and he thought he might as well make my case complete. Ian never uttered an unkind word to me till Tuesday afternoon.'

'But, Angelique, my dear, why take such a harsh course?' cried Mrs. Dodsworth eagerly. 'What is to become of you? You'll never be satisfied to come home and live as we do. We can't give you a maid and a brougham and all the rest of it.'

A sudden ribald remembrance of Mrs. Dods-

worth's airy descriptions in the old days of the luxuries at Beech Croft shot through Angelique's troubled mind. However, she choked down her untimely mirth, and turned to her mother with a very grave face.

'Mother,' she said, 'if it were your case, would you swallow such an insult? Think if it was Father—just think.'

'My dear,' said Mrs. Dodsworth solemnly, 'I assure you, even if your father was to go to the very greatest length, *nothing* would induce me to give up the shelter of his roof. I know that it sounds a very terrible thing to say, and to say to my own daughter, but I must tell you the truth. No matter how wronged a woman is, no matter how harshly treated, she loses in the eyes of the world by separating from her husband. You cannot point to a single case where a woman has let pride dominate her in which she has not suffered materially by doing so. You spoke just now of its being possibly my own case; and I assure you solemnly that if your father were absolutely to bring a mistress into my house, I would not turn out of it. Whatever happens between husband and wife, the wife has the first right to the shelter of the husband's name and roof——. Nothing would induce me to give up either. You say that Ian did not want you to

leave; then he would probably be only too glad if somebody were to mediate between you. Let me write to Ian—let me see him—I might be able to bring him to a sense of his proper duty. If I talked to Ian—he is so sensible and so reasonable and so devoted to me—and my words would have more weight than the words of any one else——' Mrs. Dodsworth broke off breathlessly, and Angelique looked at her mother with a far-away smile.

'It is very kind of you, Mother,' she said, in a grave and simple tone, 'to wish to patch up such a breach as has come between Ian and myself, but you could only meet him and discuss such a matter from your own standpoint—from the standpoint of a woman who is of a totally different nature to myself. Such a plan would bring no good result. You look first to the worldly side of the situation; you don't understand me any more than I can understand you. You don't realise that a woman can give up a life of luxury, of ease, and physical comfort for a question of honour. I would rather *die* than go back to a husband who has deceived me twice! I shall not come home; I shall not become a burden to you; I have learned a great deal of the world since I lived at Beech Croft. It is more than kind of you to offer to undertake

a task so entirely unpalatable, as it would be to you, to meet the man who has wronged and deceived your child.'

'But how are you going to live? These rooms will cost money. You——'

'Oh, we won't go into that,' said Angelique. 'I am not coming upon Father—you needn't worry about that, Mother. I shall be all right if only Gwyn may stay with me, so that I have the protection of her presence; that is all I want and hope of you. I am not penniless, I have not been kept short of money—don't, please, don't trouble your head about ways and means for a moment. By and by everything will be different—only don't worry. In time I shall know what I am doing; I shall be able to arrange myself, as it were.'

'But what will you live on?' persisted Mrs. Dodsworth.

'Well, Mother, I have not been out in the world without understanding very much what I am going to do. I shall take up journalism a little for the present, and by and by—I think I shall start in business.'

'What sort of business?'

'Possibly dressmaking,' said Angelique. 'You know I was always clever at it, I could always make my own frocks.'

'But you can't do it without capital.'

'Oh yes, when you have good friends you can do a great deal,' said Angelique. 'I have made so very many friends among women who—well, Mother dear, you don't understand—well, women who spend eight or nine hundred a year on their clothes.'

'Is it possible!' ejaculated Mrs. Dodsworth.

'Quite possible—much more possible than only spending eighty or ninety,' said Angelique, with a smile which was to Mrs. Dodsworth very mysterious.

'I am afraid,' said the old lady, 'that you have got mixed up with a very fast-living set, Angelique. I hope that it isn't any such feeling as this—the feeling that you have been going what is called "the pace" too fast—which has made Ian not altogether sorry to help you to a divorce. Of course, Ian never pretended that he was a very rich man; and if you have been living extravagantly—of course, it would make him less lenient.'

'It is a curious thing, Mother,' broke in Angelique, looking at Mrs. Dodsworth with half-closed eyes, 'that you always seem able to sympathise more with other people than with your own children. Why is it, I wonder, that everybody acquires a greater importance to you than those

who should be the most to you in all the world? You have always been the same. It was the same years and years ago when we quarrelled with our playfellows; it was the same later when Gustave Maynard forgot me for a woman with money; it has *always* been the same. How is it that you don't think first of me, and afterwards of Ian?'

'I think, Angelique,' said Mrs. Dodsworth, groping again for her handkerchief, and beginning to cry weakly, 'that you are never satisfied except you can try how unkindly you can treat me. Never was a mother so devoted as I have been to you. I am sure, looking back over your girlhood, you cannot say that there was ever a time when I have not denied myself anything and everything for the sake of my children.'

'Did you?' said Angelique.

'When *didn't* I deny myself? When have I not sacrificed every inclination of my heart for the sake of the boys and girls?'

'I don't remember it,' said Angelique quietly.

'You don't *choose* to remember it,' said Mrs. Dodsworth; 'that is all—you don't *choose* to remember it!'

'And you do, Mother,' said Angelique.

The result of Mrs. Dodsworth's laudable endeavour to effect a reconciliation between

Angelique and her husband was only to make Angelique more and more determined not in any way to seek help from her father. Of course, it was quite impossible that she could take a single farthing from Sir John Berkeley, because he had with great discrimination never again in any way alluded to the conversation which had passed between them on their way home from the place in which the encounter with Millicent Page had occurred.

Mrs. Dodsworth stayed a few days in town, going to her favourite quarters at Derrick's. Gwyn, on the contrary, at once took up her abode with Angelique. 'I think, Mother,' she said to Mrs. Dodsworth, before that good lady went back to the calmer atmosphere of Beech Croft, 'that you had better leave Angelique to take her own course. She has a very able adviser in Sir John Berkeley, who is quite like a father to her. She has made, as she says, many influential friends, and I feel sure that she will be better unfettered by such a dreadful little man as Ian. You know, I was always dead against her marrying him; I foretold a good deal of all that has happened, but Angelique would not listen to me; and now, poor girl, she has found out with great bitterness that I was right, and that she was wrong in having trusted him so far.'

'How am I to know that she will not do the same again?' asked Mrs. Dodsworth impatiently.

'Well, dear, if she does, it will be her own fault, and I don't think Angelique will ask you to bear it; she is inclined to pull through this trouble by herself, except in so far as she wishes to have the protection of my presence, which is quite a natural and proper thing for her to wish. Personally, I don't think that she will rush into matrimony again without much thought—a burnt child, you knows, dreads the fire.'

'Yes—well, since Angelique will have none of my help, she must go her own way. I came up armed with your father's permission to help her through with money, but she simply scouted the idea before I had even time to suggest it. Still, Gwyn, you know where to send if you find yourself run short—don't let Angelique deny herself ordinary comfort for the sake of writing home.'

'No, dear Mother, I won't. I will do just what you would most wish so far as I possibly can,' said Gwyn.

CHAPTER XVIII

In spite of certain vexatious delays, Angelique obtained her divorce very easily. As a matter of fact, the case was practically undefended; for, in the face of the indisputable evidence that Ian Ingram was keeping up an establishment in North Bank, and that he had actually struck his wife across the face in the presence of her own maid, he was advised by his lawyer not to enter the witness-box at all, and Angelique went out of Court to all intents and purposes a free woman. Of course, there was still before her the tiresome period of waiting ere she would be free to enter into any other matrimonial contract. Still, that time had a limit, and, with care and prudence, would soon pass by.

During the whole of this time Mrs. Torville believed that her sister was keeping herself. Through the influence of Sir John Berkeley, Angelique had got on to several ladies' papers,

and was working as a journalist. Her journalism was of the most gushing and mediocre description, but she had a certain touch with the great world which gave her work a marketable value. Through him she got many bits of information such as were not at the disposal of every scribbler, and she certainly did succeed in getting her work accepted. Sometimes she did interviews of more or less distinguished people. There, again, Sir John Berkeley's influence came in and helped her greatly; for, to please him, ladies who would not consent to receive interviewers sent by their editors, received Angelique Ingram, and as Angelique spread the butter with a lavish hand, it must be confessed that most people were very well pleased at the pen-and-ink sketches which she drew of them. Then, too, under Sir John's auspices she bloomed out as an art critic, and talked learnedly of the pictures of the year, and with an audacity which made Gwyn Torville stare in amazement. Angelique took everything as a matter of course, made her two or three pounds a week legitimately enough—and spent ten.

'Now, dear,' she said one day, when Gwyn paid for something for the housekeeping out of her own pocket, 'I don't want to use you like that. You are here as a convenience to me, and I am not going to take your money.'

It was perhaps the first time in her life that Angelique had hesitated to take money from anybody. To Gwyn such self-denial was the highest possible proof of the great change which time and sorrow had effected in her; yet it must be confessed that Mrs. Torville was one of those sweet, unsuspecting persons who can go on for a long time and see nothing that they are not intended to see, and but little further than the end of their nose.

And at the last day came when a certain little formal ceremony was performed which brought the proceedings in the Divorce Court to an end, and Angelique walked out into the fresh air of heaven as free as a bird upon the wing. 'Now I can breathe,' she said to Gwyn.

'Yes,' said Gwyn, in a choking voice, 'and I congratulate you with all my heart.'

They were bidden to lunch with Sir John Berkeley at a certain famous restaurant—that wonderful hostelry which overlooks the Thames, under whose roof you can take your meals with every luxury that the world knows and money can pay for. They sat at one end of a glass-covered terrace; and Sir John Berkeley, Gwyn, and the lawyer who had conducted the case, drank Angelique's health and prosperity in a bumper of the rarest Clicquot.

'Mrs. Ingram's troubles are all over now,' said Sir John, as he raised his glass, 'and I lay my congratulations and my good wishes at her feet. You,' looking at Gwyn, 'who love her, and you,' with a gesture towards the lawyer, 'who have helped her to this delightful freedom, will be glad to know that Mrs. Ingram's prospects are more bright than may seem to you on the surface. In three days' time you will be asked to join us at lunch again, when I hope that you will find pleasure in wishing every happiness and prosperity to Sir John Berkeley and Lady Berkeley.'

For a moment Gwyn was almost too much overwhelmed to speak. 'You never told me a word of this, Angel,' she said, half reproachfully to her sister.

'My dear,' said Angelique, turning her radiant eyes upon her, and stretching out a tender and sympathetic hand to the trembling one which Gwyn had put out towards her, 'I could not tell you—I could not speak of it. We have not spoken of it to each other in plain words—once. The day that I found out how things were going, and that I should have to leave my home, Sir John told me that I need have no fear for the future. Excepting that once, this has never been hinted at between us—so don't blame me, dear

Gwyn, for keeping you in the dark; it was the best—the *only* course that we could take.'

'And you have not wished either of us joy,' put in Sir John.

'It is so sudden,' murmured Gwyn.

'It *is* sudden—yes,' he admitted, 'it is sudden to you; but to me—no. I assure you, Mrs. Torville—Gwyn, if I may call you so, for we are to be brother and sister now—that the bitterest regret of my life is that I did not meet Angelique five or six years ago. She should never have run the cruel risks that she did run in marrying the fellow who basely betrayed and deserted her. Well, I don't want to speak against the absent and those who are the losers of the day; but although Ingram never turned Angelique out of his house or left it himself, I do consider that his betrayal was the same thing in honour as a desertion.'

It was not until they were having coffee on the terrace that Gwyn found an opportunity of speaking privately to Sir John.

'Sir John,' she said, half tremulously, 'you will be good to Angelique; you will remember all that she has gone through? Hers has been a sad and a disappointed life so far, and hers is a beautiful nature if it is treated rightly.'

'My dear,' said Sir John, in his most charming

and paternal tones, taking both her hands, and looking down upon her with a quite irresistible expression, 'my dear, I am not young; I wish that I were Angelique's age; I wish that I had known Angelique thirty years ago—for I am nearly sixty now. I cannot help having lived so many more years than she has done, but I can help her to a life of happiness as unalloyed as a life can be down here below. And I promise you that I will do my best to make your sister forget the degradation and the cruelty to which she has been subjected. I have seen so much more of the game than you. You have only been up now and again, when everything has been prepared for your coming, when everything has been gay and fresh, when Ingram has tried hard to show at his best—but I have been there constantly. For many months before the break I saw how neglected she was, how plucky, how brave, how forbearing she was. But for me, I don't think she would have taken the step which to-day has made her for a few hours a free woman. I know that your mother blamed her for leaving Ingram; it was at my suggestion, it was by my urging that she did so. I could not explain all this to you then, because it would have endangered her chance of winning her case. I could not definitely make Angelique herself any promise, for she

might have been asked the very question in Court, and she could not have foresworn herself, as you will understand. In trusting her to me, I promise you that it shall not be to a broken reed.'

Three days later Sir John Berkeley and Angelique were married. It was all managed with extreme quietness. A bishop performed the ceremony, and Mrs. Lennox by her own particular desire gave the wedding luncheon. Mr. and Mrs. Dodsworth came up in haste to the ceremony, and Gwyn made it her particular business to keep Mrs. Dodsworth and Mrs. Lennox as much apart as was possible with a woman of her mother's remarkable force of character. Angelique herself was quite open-spoken about Mrs. Dodsworth's peculiarities.

'Now, my dear girl, if you want to do me a good turn,' she said to Gwyn the day before the wedding, 'you will keep Mother from gabbling on about the glories of Beech Croft to Mrs. Lennox. Don't let her explain anything about Ian—don't let her explain anything about anything! You know how maddening Mother is when she gets on her explanations.'

'I will do my best,' said Gwyn doubtfully.

'Yes, my dear, I know it will be difficult, but do try—there's a good girl. The worst of

having the luncheon at Mrs. Lennox's house is that there will be no certainty of getting Mother away in reasonable time. I couldn't help Mother coming up; but if the lunch had been given at the *Savoy*, Mrs. Lennox would have gone the moment we had left, whereas the difficulty will be now to get Mother out of the house after we have departed.'

'But why don't you make her go to the station to see you off?' Gwyn suggested.

'That is a happy thought,' said Angelique; 'that is a very good thought of yours, Gwyn. Yes, that is what we will do. I will get her to go to the station to see us off—that is a delightfully happy thought.'

Mrs. Dodsworth, thus hedged about, had really but very small chance of cultivating her acquaintance with Angelique's great and influential friend. She found herself placed at table between the bishop and Angelique's lawyer; and as the bishop was very much occupied on the other hand with Mrs. Lennox, Mrs. Dodsworth was able to discuss the whole affair to her heart's content with the man of law. He was very much bored, it must be admitted, but his astute brain grasped the situation at a glance, and he allowed Mrs. Dodsworth to babble pleasantly on, and even to teach him his own business, with a

patience which was a little short of the marvellous. She explained to him the entire law concerning divorce, and gave him points on a good many other legal matters, which he would have hesitated to answer offhand without going through the ceremony of consulting certain great legal tomes, or conferring with great living authorities, after the process which is known as 'taking Counsel's opinion.' Mrs. Dodsworth had no such hesitancy, and the patience or seeming patience with which her remarks were received served to put her into the most bland and delightful humour. On the whole, Gwyn's task turned out to be quite an easy one; and when Sir John, at Angelique's instigation, suggested that Mr. and Mrs. Dodsworth should go to Victoria to see the last of them, Mrs. Dodsworth's cup of happiness was full to overflowing. 'It is not only,' she said to Mrs. Williams a few days later, 'that Mr. Dodsworth and I are so gratified to think that everything should have come straight after all—for, naturally, Angelique's unhappy marriage has been a terrible trouble to all of us—but it is personally so delightful to me that Angelique's distinguished husband should be so attached to me. I assure you, he would not hear of our not going to the station to see the last of them.'

'But the other one was so fond of you,' said Mrs. Williams maliciously.

'He always *professed* to be so,' replied Mrs. Dodsworth with emphasis.

Meantime, Sir John and Angelique were enjoying an idyllic and to her wholly delightful holiday or honeymoon. They went first to Paris, where the general exodus for the summer had not yet commenced; and, for the first time in her life, Angelique was enabled to taste the sweets of adulation and the advantages of a great personal position, for Sir John Berkeley's name was one known throughout the whole civilised world, his personality was a pseudonym for all that is popular and lovable.

They stayed at a first-class hotel, Angelique had as much money as she required for the purchase of *chiffons*, carriages were at her disposal, and she received more invitations than she could possibly accept. For a few weeks life passed for her in one whirl of gaiety. Then Sir John professed himself tired of Paris, declared that they could no longer support the heat or the irritation of continual going out, and carried her off to that centre of summer simplicity and gaiety—Homburg.

There Angelique went into the very best society. She was a little overcome when she

was presented to the illustrious gentleman who has made Homburg his own; but her's was an adaptive nature, and she very soon got used to meeting royalties, and thought no more of them than of many other smart folk whose acquaintance she made during that delightful sojourn. Over and over again she assured Sir John that he had made her quite, quite happy; that she looked back to her past with no regrets, and forward to her future with only the anticipation of further joy. As for Sir John, he seemed to have renewed his youth. It is so sometimes with elderly men who take young wives unto themselves; and to him the alliance into which he had entered was one which was all gain, one which had many advantages, and apparently no drawbacks.

'You must forgive us, dear Lady Berkeley,' said a beautiful young countess to her one evening, 'if we openly make love to your charming husband under your very eyes. You see, we have so long made love to Sir John, that it has become more or less of a habit with us. You won't *quite* take him away from us, will you?'

'Oh, no,' said Angelique, 'I shall never take Sir John away unless he wishes to go.'

'Ah, that is so sweet of you,' said her ladyship, 'and I think so wise. I have always acted on

the same principle myself. Now with Aycaster I have always said, "My dear boy, go your way, and I will go my way, and then we shall never be *ennuyé-d* of one another." '

'That would be very dreadful,' said Angelique, 'to be *ennuyé-d* of one another; but at present Sir John's way is my way.'

'Oh, yes—or is your way Sir John's way?'

'Well, perhaps my way is Sir John's way,' Angelique admitted.

'That is so sweet—quite idyllic, is it not, Princess? Lady Berkeley says that we shall never be able to flirt with her husband again; we shall never be able to make love to our dear Sir John any more—really, it is quite a tragedy.'

'I don't think I said that,' said Angelique.

'No, but you implied it. You said that your way was Sir John's way, and Sir John's way was your way. It is quite idyllic. I only hope it may last. Dear me, Princess, didn't Cissie Waterfall begin in something the same way? Do you remember when Cissie Waterfall was first married?'

'Cissie Waterfall? Oh—yes, yes.'

'She was very much *affiché-d* with her husband, was she not?'

'Oh, quite painfully so, very dreadfully *affiché-d* with her husband. Of course, it is very beautiful

while it lasts, and equally, of course,' said the Princess, 'any woman who found herself married to Sir John would feel that way—for a time. I am sure we have all made love to Sir John always, and I can quite understand that even his wife must find the same habit fatally hard to break herself of.'

'I don't think,' said Angelique, trying to speak very calmly and quietly, 'that I have made love to Sir John for so long that—in fact, I don't think that I have made love to Sir John at all; it is Sir John who has made love to me.'

'Very proper—quite beautiful and idyllic. One only hopes it will last—or rather, I only hope that it won't last for ever, because we shonld all be quite disconsolate if our Sir John were to turn his back upon us. Don't you think so, Princess?'

'It would be too painful to have no Sir John,' said the Princess, smiling, 'but we must not make Lady Berkeley unhappy or uneasy. She will get used to the wholesale love that is made to her husband by and by—women all do it—it is like taking chloral, a habit they cannot break themselves of. And what a happy woman you must be, Lady Berkeley! Fancy being married to our dear Sir John and having him always. Fancy being able to go everywhere with him—lucky

woman. We have to put up with just a word now and again, scarcely that.'

But Angelique very soon found that these great ladies of fashion were not inclined to put up with a word now and again with Sir John. She found that they had spoken truly when they said that they made love to him; for they did that in the most barefaced and open manner, using him for this, that, and the other, sending him on all manner of quests, bestowing their favours lavishly upon him, and demanding considerable service in return. When first she became aware of this she chafed not a little under the process.

'How dare these women order you about like this, John?' she said indignantly to him one day when the Princess Hermione von Dosters Deyn, who was English born and patrician, had asked him to procure her some special book from Frankfort.

'My dear,' said Sir John easily, 'it is the way of these women. If one was a nobody, they would see one hanged before they would ask one to get them anything; it is the price that I pay for being Sir John Berkeley and somebody a little out of the common. And it is the price that you must pay for being Lady Berkeley and somebody very much out of the common.'

'But why should you be lackey to these women?'

'Lackey! Come, come, that is a hard word. It doesn't sound pretty from a lady's lips. It is my privilege and very much my pleasure to obey the mandate of any fair lady.'

'Yes, that was all very well when you were not married.'

'My dear girl, we have got to think of our bread and butter though I am married—rather more so, in fact. You forget that your old city set, which you hated so much, have all the money—*all* the money; but they are easy to dazzle in certain ways, not because I paint better than most people, not because I am Sir John, Royal Academician and all that—no, no, but because I paint the princesses and the duchesses and all these fashionable fine ladies with whom your city people true and proper have absolutely no touch. For instance, take your great financier's wife—she is very rich, she is no beauty, she is a bit common, and more than a bit doubtful of her position, she wants to have her portrait in the Academy. So who does she choose to get it there?'

'The best artist, of course,' said Angelique.

'How does she know who is the best artist?' said he contemptuously. 'Well, she does not

know, she hasn't the least idea, but the artist whom she does choose is the one that paints the most aristocratic women—see?'

'Oh yes, I see,' said Angelique; 'but, at the same time, I don't like it.

'My dear girl, you will have to put up with it. It is not a question of whether you like it; it is a question of bread and butter. If I were to change all my habits of life because I am married to a young and charming woman, whom I love with all my soul, I should lose a good half of my commissions. Now, my dear girl, you and I cannot afford to have our income halved; on the contrary, I would prefer to double it, because I would like you to have everything that your station and your beauty deserve. By the bye,' he added, in a different tone, 'the next time you see me eating cream at dinner, kick me.'

Angelique fairly jumped. 'Why, John!' she exclaimed, 'kick you! What do you mean?'

'Mean? Why, that I have got the heartburn, my dear girl; I have got the heartburn most dreadfully. Cream always does give me the heartburn. I don't know what I am such a fool as to eat it for.'

'Well, really, John,' said Angelique, laughing in spite of herself, 'you are foolish at your age if you eat anything that you know will make you ill.'

'It won't make me ill,' said Sir John, a little testily, 'but it gives me the heartburn, and heartburn is unpleasant. I think I had better have—let me see—a liqueur brandy to counteract it. Ring the bell as you are so near, there's a good child.'

Angelique stretched out her hand and rang the bell. The great painter ordered his liqueur brandy, and drank it with evident relish. 'Will you have one, dearest?' he asked, as the waiter left the room.

'I think not,' said Angelique; 'I haven't got the heartburn.'

'Ah, and you had cream, I saw you. Lucky girl!'

It happened only a few nights after this—a couple of nights after—that they were dining on the Kursaal Terrace, with a very distinguished party, when Angelique saw Sir John help himself liberally to rich cream. She was quite on the other side of the table, and it was a large round table, at which it was quite impossible for her to convey to him by a touch of the foot that he was eating the forbidden fruit. Once or twice she looked uneasily at him and coughed, trying to attract his attention; but Sir John, who was seated next to a beautiful and charming woman, was blind and deaf and dumb to any

outside influences whatever, and ate his cream as rapidly as the conventionalities would allow. In her despair she spoke to him, literally dragging him into the conversation as it were by the heels; and once having attracted his attention, she said to him, 'John, you know what you told me the other night to remind you of.'

''Pon my soul,' he answered, 'I don't. I forget all about it. What was it?' As he spoke, he took another good spoonful of cream, and washed it down with a draught of champagne.'

'Oh, yes, you do know. You told me to remind you of something. Don't you remember?'

'No, my dear, I don't remember,' he replied, with persistent good-humour, and equally persistent want of understanding.

'It doesn't matter,' said Angelique hopelessly.

And that night Sir John was really very ill.

'I cannot think,' he said, when they had reached the shelter of their own apartments, 'I cannot think what has made me feel so bad to-night.'

'My dear John, it was all the cream you ate at dinner,' said Angelique.

'Cream? Why the devil didn't you stop me?,' he blurted out.

'Well, I did everything I could. I couldn't

say to you, "John, don't eat cream; it gives you the heartburn," before all those people, and before the Prince and all. How could I? I did say to you that you told me to remind you of something.'

'Ah—by Jove! So you did—dear—dear. Well, I didn't understand. Look here now, Angelique. I must have a code with you, though really you should have told me more plainly; if you had just said "cream," I should have known what you meant.'

'But, John, I didn't like to do that; it might look as if—as if——'

'Well?'

'Well, as if you had set up a nurse, and I was grudging you your food and all that. I didn't like to.'

'By Jove, perhaps it would have done! One cannot be too careful with these people. But, I tell you what, Angelique, I do feel most horribly ill. I hope I am not going to have the spasms. Now, what else did I eat? It couldn't have only been the cream, because that only gives me heartburn. Oh, dear, how dreadful this is! It is getting worse every minute. Stay, I have it—it was the lobster salad. What a fool I was to eat that lobster salad; it always makes me ill.'

'Oh, John,' she cried, 'why in the world don't

you tell me what does make you ill, and what doesn't?'

'My dear, you know that cream makes me ill, but it didn't make you stop me from eating it,' he replied.

'Well, John, it was only consideration for you that didn't make me stop you in the plainest of language; but, as you said just now, couldn't we have some code by which I could tell you?'

'My dear child, if I had some brandy, that would be better than a code, because I am getting worse every minute. I can't breathe.'

'What shall I do? Shall I send for a doctor?' Angelique cried, for she was getting frightened.

'Send for some brandy,' he gasped.

So Angelique tore at the bell and ordered some brandy immediately. But this time brandy was of no avail; and, after an hour of unrelieved anguish, Angelique took the law into her own hands and sent for a doctor. By that time Sir John was writhing about in what was little short of intense agony.

'Now, what is the meaning of this, pray?' asked the doctor, when he had grasped the full state of affairs.

'Well, I am afraid it means lobster salad, doctor,' said Angelique apologetically.

'Ah, dear, dear, dear! What does an old

gentleman like you want to eat lobster salad for? And at night too,' said the doctor, who was a perfect Abernethy for calling a spade a spade. 'And pray what else did you have for dinner? Tell me that.'

'I am afraid he had some cream, doctor, and a good deal of it.'

'Cream? What sort of cream?'

'Well, it was thick rich cream—compôte.'

'Oh, dear, dear, dear, you Englishmen are very strange—very strange. You are not content with eating lobster salad at night, but must eat rich cream too—enough to kill you!—enough to kill you!'

'Yes, I know it was enough to kill me,' said Sir John between gasps of pain, 'the greater—fool—I to—do it. But give me—something—doctor.'

'I will. Now, my dear lady, this foolish gentleman must have a mustard poultice—all over the stomach—at once.'

'I wonder if they have any mustard in the hotel,' said Angelique rather blankly. As a matter of fact, Angelique had never made a mustard poultice in her life, and had about as much idea how to do it as she had of mixing medicines.

The doctor looked at her. 'Can you make a mustard poultice?' he asked blandly.

'I never did, but I can if you tell me how,' said Angelique confidently.

'Ah, you English ladies, I thought you could do anything. Now, I will give you a less—on. Permit me to ring the bell.—Ah, Adolph, you are the very man I require. Bring me a large tin of English mustard and a little flour; and a basin—a large basin—ah, well, the basin in the next room will do. Yes.'

'You will want a kettle, won't you?' said Angelique.

'You make mustard poultices of *cold* water, my dear lady,' replied the doctor crushingly.

'Oh, I didn't know,' faltered Angelique.

'No—no—but you will! I will show you. You will often want them. A gentleman who will eat cream and lobster salad at the same meal will do anything; he will never learn wisdom. Now—something thin—something of muslin. Yes, that will do, that will do—very nice—very nice indeed. Yes. Spread it out—yes, so. Now, you see, I just mix the mustard and the flour, one part of flour to five of mustard, and I pour in the cold water, and then—I spread it out on the muslin, spread it nice and thin, and double the muslin over, and, mind you, keep it out of your eyes. Now then—open the chest.—Yes. And now the comforting little plaster shall go

on.—There! What, it makes you shudder? You will not shudder long—you will not shudder long.'

'And how long is that to stop on?' asked Angelique.

'Till you cannot persuade your husband to keep it on any longer. When the poor stomach is nice and red—scarlet—crimson—like a cherry, then you may take it off and gently dab the place, and dust a little of the plain flour over it—that is it.'

'And about medicine?' asked Angelique.

'I will send a bottle of medicine, and the best medicine for the future is—no lobster salad—no cream. You must remember, my friend, that you are not as young as you were twenty years ago; you must leave these indigestible articles of food to the young and foolish. I will look in in the morning. Good-night, my dear lady. Good-night.'

For a moment after the door closed there was silence; then Sir John looked round. 'Is he gone?'

'Yes.'

'The man's a fool,' he said curtly.

'Well, I don't know, dear. I think he is wise in one way. You ought not to have eaten that salad, you know.'

'Pooh, the old fool! Idiot! I shall eat what I like. By Jove, but this thing's getting warm.'

'My dear boy, you can't take it off yet. You must keep it on for at least twenty minutes—he said so.'

'Twenty minutes? How long have I had it on now?'

'Oh, not more than three.'

'Good Heavens! why, I shall be dead in twenty minutes. By Jove, how it does sting!'

CHAPTER XIX

WHEN Angelique found herself back in London and comfortably established in her distinguished husband's beautiful house in Holland Park, she began to understand what a life of pleasure really meant. When I say back in London, I do not mean just the time when they went back merely on their return from the Continent, for then they were only in town for a few days at a time. They paid half-a-dozen extremely smart visits during that autumn; twice they went down to Brighton for a few days; and they also stayed a short time at Tunbridge Wells, as Sir John took it into his head that he needed a course of electric baths. But the beginning of December found them settled at home for the winter, and enjoying a run of gaiety such as Angelique had never experienced before.

At first she had hard work to keep up with the visits which were paid her. 'It is awfully hard

work being Lady Berkeley,' she said to Sir John one day, when he asked her what her plans were. 'I put in seventeen calls yesterday, John.'

'How many women did you find at home?'

'Oh, only three; but the fag of making out the list and thinking out the people and all that—oh, it is dreadful.'

'My dear girl,' he said, with a laugh, 'it is nothing to what you will have to get through in the season, when all the really smart folk come back to town. Show Sunday will begin the treadmill for us.'

As yet, however, Angelique was very much fascinated with a society life, and she duly fagged round, dropping visiting cards or paying the shortest of visits, until she felt that there was not one person who could reasonably feel that she had been neglected.

About this time her debts began to trouble her; not the debts which she had accumulated before that meeting with Millicent Page, because *they* naturally fell to the share of the unfortunate Ian Ingram. I say unfortunate, because the wretched little man had been pretty well drained of money between the two women with whom he had been connected—his wife and his mistress. He had been lavish enough with both; and when he discovered the thousands of pounds which

Angelique had squandered, he had little or no choice than to go bankrupt by way of getting rid of them. Truly, Ian Ingram had paid very dear for his whistle, and, I think, with one exception, every one who knew him—who knew in any way the circumstances of his case—was in a measure sorry for him when they saw the announcement of the liquidation of his affairs in the newspapers. That one exception was Angelique herself. Strangely enough, although everything had fallen out as she had planned and intended, in Angelique's heart there burned a steady, fierce resentment against the man who had once been her husband.

I think I have said before that during the latter part of the time that she was living in rooms with Gwyn pending the trial of her case or awaiting the final decree, she had made a little money by her pen—a mere trifle, a matter of two or three pounds a week. She had lived during the whole of that time with a great show of economy, but her weekly expenses had never been less than about ten pounds. She had, from motives of guarding against annoyance in the future, refused any help from her father; and although, in spite of the pretty notions with which she had started, she had used Gwyn's little income as freely as if it were her own, she

had not been able to avoid beginning her second married life with what may be called a snug little nest-egg of liabilities. It was not a very large one—oh, dear, no, not much more than she had carried into her first married life. Her father had given her a hundred pounds for her wedding present, that she might purchase herself some suitable garments; and Sir John, as soon as they were married, had told her that he could allow her three hundred a year for pin-money.

Goodness knows, Angelique had intended to begin and continue her second venture in matrimony without any of those troubles which had been so irksome to her in the time of Ian Ingram. She had not forgotten the lesson that Sir John himself had unintentionally taught her, in speaking of the Duchess of Twyford as being too great a lady to need to give a thought to her personal appearance. She had used the whole of her father's wedding present as sops to existent debts, and the few garments which she had bought for herself she had in each case put into the bill.

Now, Homburg is not a place where you require very elaborate clothing, and Angelique had felt herself quite as well equipped and a great deal smarter looking than most of the great ladies whose acquaintance she made during

her stay there; but when she came to stay in large and very smart country houses, then everything was altered. For instance, the first visit he made was at the Duchess of Sevenoaks, and lasted four days. Angelique took with her two day dresses, two dinner dresses, and two beautiful new tea-gowns. The first two days she felt as well dressed as any other woman there; but on the third day, when each lady excepting the Duchess herself came down in a fresh morning gown, changed it for a fresh tea-gown, and then sported an entirely different confection for the evening, Angelique felt her whole soul grow sick within her to think that she, little more than a bride, and the bride of such a great man as Sir John Berkeley, should be the only one to appear in garments which had been seen before. It is true that the young Duchess of Sevenoaks was very much like the old Duchess of Twyford, and cared not one jot about clothes, never showed in a tea-gown at all, but made her appearance each afternoon in the great hall wearing the same tweed skirt, edged with leather, in which she had been tramping about during the whole of the morning. But then, as Angelique told herself, she was not the Duchess of Sevenoaks—she was only the wife of Sir John Berkeley, the eminent painter.

'I feel so mad,' she said to Sir John, on that

third afternoon, when they were dressing for dinner.

'Why do you feel mad?'

'Because I have only got two tea-gowns, and all the other women have got three, and probably four. What I shall wear to-morrow, I don't know.'

'The Duchess didn't wear a tea-gown at all did she?' asked Sir John.

'No, she didn't, and she has worn the same dress every day,' replied Angelique. 'But what an object she looks!'

'Well, she does, that is quite true. But why didn't you get yourself enough tea-gowns?'

'My dear, I never came to a house like this before. I didn't know women wore a fresh dress for every hour,' answered Angelique, looking at him with her wide-open, distressed eyes.

Sir John caught hold of her and held her fast imprisoned within his arms. 'Poor little woman! Didn't it have tea-gowns enough? Now, look here, I am not going to have you made miserable for the sake of a few rags, so before we go on to the Levison-Turnours, you take care that you get enough clothes. You see, dear, these women who pay a dozen visits in one autumn, they can't make three dresses last right through the whole time; it isn't likely—not unless they are duchesses—

so they start with plenty and wear the same set at every house; it really is quite the most reasonable plan. And then their maids know exactly how to pack them, and what they will take, so do you take a lesson out of their books and arrange your own affairs accordingly.'

A kind of thrill shot through Angelique's heart. She threw up her arms impulsively about his neck and held up her face to be kissed. 'Oh, you are a dear!' she said, with a great sigh.

'I hope that doesn't mean that you have had your doubts about it,' he said teasingly. 'Why my darling, you are all in the world to me, and I have never been so happy—well, *never* as I have been since you were my wife. I never knew what real happiness was before. And do you suppose I am going to spoil your happiness for the sake of a few clothes? What a bear you must think your old man! Tell me—you are not sorry you married the old man, are you?'

'Sorry!' cried Angelique, 'sorry! Oh, no, I have never been so happy—never!' And then she felt vexed with herself that a sudden remembrance of Ian Ingram came unbidden into her mind.

Angelique passed the rest of her country-house visits in the greatest comfort, for she went fully equipped to be as brave in her attire as any

of the others. She had exquisite taste in dress, and in truth received the fullest acknowledgment from the other ladies of the fact.

'Of course, Lady Berkeley is always well dressed,' said one lady to another in Angelique's presence, 'and of course you have the advantage,' turning to Angelique, 'of having Sir John's exquisite taste always at command.'

'I never consult my husband about my clothing,' said Angelique.

'Don't you, really?' cried another. 'I should if I were you; but, then, I never trust my own taste, it is too much trouble. I go to Michelle, and I say, "Now, Michelle, I am going to so-and-so, and so-and-so, and I will trust you to turn me out properly." That is the beauty of Michelle, you can always trust her.'

'Yes, but Michelle is so expensive,' said the first speaker, who was an enormously rich woman, and therefore delighted in saving a shilling where she could. 'I went to Michelle once when you advised me; she made me a little gown for the morning—twenty guineas, if you please, and sniffed at me because I said it was dear. Oh, I can't stand Michelle, she is beyond me altogether.'

'She is not cheap,' said the other. 'Where do you go, Lady Berkeley?'

'I go to a little woman who is a find of my own—a little Frenchwoman,' said Angelique.

'I am in want of a little woman,' said the rich lady. 'You might give me her address—you don't mind, do you? I will recommend you to any of my tradespeople. I think it is absolute wanton waste to go to a woman like Michelle and let her charge you anything that she chooses. You don't get a bit the better served for it, and you are not one bit better dressed. And as for allowing a woman to dress you like a fashion plate, *that* I would never do. Really, Rosalie, I am surprised that you will own to it.'

'I don't mind owning to it,' said the patroness of the talented Michelle. 'I don't profess to be as good at thinking out clothes as a woman who makes it her business. Michelle understands what suits one; I am always suitably dressed, and I have no trouble. It is true she is not cheap, but then she is very patient in the way of credit. Lady Berkeley's little Frenchwoman may be all very well, but such a person gives an infinitude of trouble. I have tried them. Life is too short for worry of that kind. Better let me give you Michelle's address and an introduction to her. You will find her perfectly invaluable, particularly if you are going to be presented, as, of course, you will be on your marriage.'

'No, I shall not be presented,' said Angelique.

'Oh, really? That is very odd. Now, why?'

'Because, you see, I divorced my first husband.'

'Divorced your first husband? Dear, dear, dear. That is very sad—that is very sad. But what a lucky woman you must be to have divorced your first husband and then married Sir John Berkeley! Dear me, what luck some people have! I wish I could divorce my husband.'

'But, my dear,' said the rich woman, 'I thought you were quite devoted to Lord Packhurst.'

'Devoted to Packhurst? Oh, quite so—tremendously devoted; but fancy being able to divorce a husband without any scandal beyond just the fact of not being able to go to Court. Why, think of the excitement and the delightful change in one's life! Why, it would be too splendid! Lady Berkeley is a lucky woman. I should be delighted to give you Michelle's address and an introduction to her at any time if you would like to have it. Was your first husband nice?'

'No,' said Angelique curtly.

'Not nice? Young?'

'Yes, he was young.'

'And he was called—what was he called?'

'His name was Ingram.'

'Ingram? Good name, Ingram. Does he

belong to *the* Ingrams—the Warrington Ingrams?'

'I think not,' said Angelique; 'and, if you don't mind, I would rather not talk about my first husband. I parted from him, and I never think about him if I can avoid it.'

'Ah, I see—you really liked him. Poor girl, how very sad! That would be the worst of getting a divorce from Packhurst—I really like him. Of course, it is most unfashionable to like your husband—most unfashionable and most awkward. What did he do, your husband?'

'The usual thing,' said Angelique, wishing devoutly that she would stop.

'The usual thing? Another woman? Poor dear, why didn't you behave sensibly and forgive him? It is very beautiful to forgive one's husband, particularly if one likes him.'

'I did forgive him,' said Angelique, 'once.'

'Once? And you couldn't the second time. Ah, well, that was very weak of you. Now, I wonder how often I have forgiven Packhurst's little affairs. Let me see now, Rosalie—there was that little affair with Lady Veronica. I was very angry about that. Of course, he swore there was nothing in it, and perhaps he was right; but still, he did give her a diamond cross.

is getting serious when your husband gives
ay diamond crosses. Then there was a red-
red creature that I saw him at Ascot with.
ever found out quite who she was; he said
re was nothing in *that*. Packhurst always
s there is nothing in it—it's a safe thing to
. I wonder if he would think there was
hing in it if he saw me flaunting about
h a red-haired creature at Ascot or else-
ere? Then there was his little affair with
ı, Rosalie. He said there was nothing in
t.'

'There was certainly nothing in that,' said the
ı woman.

Wasn't there? No, you are too rich to want
mond crosses, but he did admire you—oh, yes,
did admire you—unpleasantly much. And
:r you, he was a little *épris* with our dear
chess here. That would have been an affair
'ond the ordinary run if she had not been so
adfully cold-hearted. I shall never forget
at she said when she gave me a hint of what
ı going on. "My dear Effie," she said to me,
wish you would take your husband away, he is
nost embarrassing person to have staying in
house. I have got nobody fresh for him to
ke love to, and he persists in making love to
. I don't mind, I am quite proof against that

kind of thing, but the Duke is curiously old-fashioned, and he does object so. Just take him away, there's a good girl." And I did take Packhurst away. He was—er—very unwilling to go. He said—er—that she was his ideal, but I was firm, because I am very fond of the Duchess, and I have always found her an exceedingly good sort, and—er—I had no wish to have my friendship imperilled. So I took Packhurst quite by storm, I—er—made love to him myself, and he was so surprised that he positively could not resist me. We went off to the Isle of Wight, and had a new honeymoon—er—it was most embarrassing. We called our youngest boy Osborne,' she added reflectively. 'Ah, my dear,' she continued, turning to Angelique, 'I am sure Sir John is very charming and nice and sweet and dear and all that, but in future I would advise you to remember the beauty of forgiveness. You can't go on divorcing your husbands, you know. Of course, you have not been married very long, and you think that Sir John will always be satisfied, and all that—and perhaps he will—but you must not forget that Sir John has lived a life of great popularity. The quantity of women in London who say, "Sir John Berkeley is *mine!*" is really beyond calculation. I know a dozen women at this moment

who would be fit to tear out one's eyes if one even spoke an extra word to him. You ought to think yourself lucky that poison-rings and love-philtres and such-like things have gone out of fashion.'

CHAPTER XX

In the last chapter I mentioned Angelique's liabilities but wandered away from the subject. She naturally went to none of the same people with whom she had dealt as Mrs. Ian Ingram—at least, I mean to none of those people with whom she had dealt previous to her leaving Ian Ingram's house. All those, or nearly all those with whom she had dealt during the interregnum, had been recommended to her by Mrs. Lennox, and were people accustomed to dealings with persons in good society.

Somehow, in spite of her laudable intentions to the contrary, Angelique found her dress allowance singularly inadequate. She never really felt that she could adorn her position without the advantages and aid of beautiful and artistic dress. Sir John was very particular about her appearance; he admired her very greatly, and would notice in a moment if her hair were less elaborately

dressed for breakfast than it had been for a dinner-party the previous evening. He was a man of the highest artistic taste, a characteristic which does not always belong to the distinguished painter; he really liked to see his wife the best dressed of any woman in a room; and invariably met her small attempts at economy with the same unanswerable argument, 'Ah, well, my dear, of course it is very nice of you to be so careful; but I have dressed so many beautiful women in my time, that the world would think it very strange if my own beautiful wife were not suitably dressed to her appearance and position. You must have suitable things for certain occasions.'

'Yes, that is all very well, John,' said Angelique one day in a kind of desperation, when the subject under discussion was a great costume ball to which they were bidden, 'but I simply cannot afford to have dresses at this rate, and this costume that you propose will be nothing unless it is specially made for me, and it will cost a great deal of money.'

'Oh, well,' said Sir John easily, 'we can afford you an extra dress now and again, particularly,' slipping his arm around her waist, 'if you are very kind to me.'

It must be admitted that Angelique shuddered.

'I hope that I am always kind to you, John,' she said, half piteously.

Sir John drew her to him and kissed her, kissed her not once nor twice, but at least a dozen times. 'You might be a little kinder to me —sometimes,' he said, with a half-wistful eagerness; 'it would make such a difference to me.'

'I am very fond of you, John,' faltered Angelique.

'Yes, but I want you to be something more than very fond of me. I want you to make a little more of me.'

A great revulsion of feeling settled down upon Angelique's spirit, again a remembrance of Ian Ingram came back to her, of the husband who had been unfaithful, who had had many faults, who had laboured under many disadvantages, who had belonged to a third-rate Jewish City set, but who had never wanted that kind of consideration. She made a great effort; but try as she would, she could not keep back the shudder which shook her whole person, she could not keep back the remembrance of the husband who, even while he had deceived her, had valued her love so high that he had been content with but the barest expression of her feelings. A little kiss lightly given had always been sufficient to make him her abject slave; in all their life together, Ian Ingram

had never asked her to be kinder to him—he had been amply satisfied with her toleration. Looking back, it struck her with a sort of wonder that she had yearned as fiercely to get rid of the one husband as she had done to be the wife of the other.

The result of that little chat was that Sir John gave her a cheque for fifty pounds as an extra to her pin-money. Angelique took it with a feeling that it burned her fingers; that it was the price of her soul; that it was the gage of her degradation. However, the money stood her in good stead, and helped her round an exceedingly bad corner; and gradually Angelique got back into her old habits of spending money like water, though it was more as one would take a narcotic than for the actual pleasure of acquiring possessions.

'My dear Lady Berkeley,' said a beautiful young woman to her after dinner one evening, 'I wonder if you really understand how women in London envy you? I wonder,' with a sigh, 'what it is like to have a husband like Sir John.'

'Oh, very delightful,' said Angelique drily.

'I should think so—I should quite think so. Most of our husbands are just rich or ordinary; there is nothing delightful about the common or garden husband; but to have a husband whom

every other woman envies you—it must be delightful for words!'

'I don't see why you should envy me my husband. Your own husband is very nice and very good-looking, and apparently very rich,' said Angelique sweetly.

'Yes, but he is not Sir John. There is nothing *chic* about our husbands. Now, I was perfectly conscious to-night that every woman at the table envied me for having gone in with Sir John.'

'Do you really think so?' said Angelique.

'Yes, I do really think so. Our hostess was obliged to take in a man of higher rank, or she would not have let me have Sir John.'

'Well, *I* don't want to go in to dinner with Sir John,' said Angelique.

'No, because you have him always. I wonder,' with a sigh, 'do you ever get a feeling of "toujours perdrix."'

'Perhaps,' said Angelique.

'Ah, it is always the same! Women who would give the whole world to be in your shoes have to do with a pair of quite another cut, and the women who have got the shoes don't value them.'

'Perhaps they know where they pinch,' said Angelique, with a laugh.

It was not a very real sounding laugh; but the lady to whom she was talking was not a person of very keen perception, and she only thought Angelique insufferably uppish in pretending that she did not particularly value being Sir John's lawful possessor.

Now it happened that evening that Angelique had seen Sir John eat no less than three things which she knew would entirely and utterly disagree with him. They were going on from this dinner to a very smart dance, and on the way from one house to the other she took occasion to warn him against indulging in any more indiscretions of a gastronomic description. 'John,' she said, 'you mustn't eat any more things that will make you ill to-night. You emptied that dish of olives in front of you—I saw you do it—and you will be ill as sure as fate.'

'Oh, no, I was most sparing,' he replied easily.

'John, indeed, you were not sparing. You took a lot of ice pudding—twice as much as you ought to have taken.'

'I will tell you what it is, my dear,' said Sir John testily, 'if you go on as you have begun, you will be a first-class shrew in about six months more.'

'I don't want to be a shrew,' said Angelique, 'but you know how ill that sort of thing makes

you, and you know how careful the doctor says you ought to be.'

'Oh, nothing I took to-night will hurt me.'

'Very well,' said Angelique; 'then when you get to Lady Martindale's, have a good supper of salmon and lobster salad and a few plovers' eggs; and then you had better ring for Wilson to come and put your poultices on.'

Now if Sir John had a dislike to anything, it was letting his valet, who had been with him for fifteen or sixteen years, know when he needed poultices. In his dressing-room there was a complete apparatus for the manufacture of mustard poultices—indeed, for the manufacture of several kinds of poultices—and on occasions when such things were needed, one of Sir John's chiefest anxieties was that everything should be cleared away so that Wilson should know nothing about it in the morning.

Angelique's hint, however, had the desired effect, and he put his arm around her in an access of affection evoked by her care of him. 'There, little woman,' he said, 'I didn't mean to be crusty. What a brute I am! You are far too good to me. I was an ass to eat what I did, and I will be very careful for the rest of the evening.'

Alas! his care being tardy, availed him nothing.

He was very ill during the course of that night, and Angelique got no rest; still worse, she found her thoughts more than once reverting to Ian Ingram, who had been in the general habit of going to sleep when he got into bed and waking up with the tea in the morning.

Still, there were alleviations to her lot. Her visiting-list at this time was a thing to behold, a thing to envy. It boasted of no fewer than seven duchesses; and Angelique very soon began to regard social obligations as much in the light of an intolerable nuisance as if she had been born of the upper ten thousand, and had never yearned to be known in society.

It would be hard to say why, but she found her tradespeople less obliging to Lady Berkeley than they had been to Mrs. Ian Ingram. They were all intensely civil; they apologised profusely when insisting upon having cheques, but they insisted all the same; and as Angelique never had any money, and Sir John never seemed exactly willing to settle deficiencies in that respect, the situation soon became an extremely strained one. Then Angelique, with that strange habit of ignoring the lessons of yesterday, and of letting to-morrow take care of itself, went back to her old methods of raising money with which to meet present emergencies. Her first transac-

tion of the kind as Lady Berkeley was simple enough. She went to a big jeweller's in Bond Street, and she spent a couple hundred pounds in jewellery—in diamonds. They never thought of refusing Lady Berkeley credit for the goods, and an obliging pawnbroker very soon changed the new purchases into ready money for half the amount.

For a few days Angelique's heart sang 'Begone dull care!' and Sir John was more infatuated about her than ever. She took the opportunity of working the oracle with him, and of extracting the price of a new gown out of him. About this time they gave a little dinner-party to a royal gentleman, at which Angelique had it all her own way.

'My dear,' said Sir John, when the Personage had gone away, 'you were adorable, you carried everything before you. I was never so proud in my life.'

'I am afraid, John,' said Angelique, 'that on the whole I have been rather a bad speculation to you.'

'Not at all, the most charming speculation I ever made in my life. By the bye, did you notice Lady Susan's little daughter? How sweetly pretty and dainty she is! I knew her,' Sir John went on, leaning back in his chair, and staring at

the ceiling with a fatuous expression, 'I knew her before she was born—that is to say, I knew Lady Susan long before she married old Herring—long, long before. She was a pretty girl—how she could bring herself to marry old Herring nobody could ever tell; but fashionable women do do these extraordinary things, and I suppose they are satisfied with the life that such marriages bring them.'

Angelique stared wide-eyed at her husband. 'Was it possible,' her thoughts ran, 'that this man had no knowledge, no conception of the fact that she too had married much in the same way as Lady Susan Herring? Was it possible that he believed she had married him for love? Oh, it was too incredible; it was preposterous!'

Sir John, still staring at the ceiling, went on: 'Yes—there was a young fellow she was in love with—dear, dear, how well I remember it—years and years ago. I never quite knew the details of how and why the marriage never came off, but Lady Susan was reported to be heart-broken. Society always will have it that these fair creatures are heart-broken; whereas, as a rule, they have no hearts to break, and would sell their souls for a handful of diamonds. I think she liked the fellow all the same; however, she married old Herring the banker, and little Miss

Dulcie is the result. Well, well, well, perhaps she knew what she was doing better than anybody else. Lady Susan has had her affairs, and looks happy enough. I should like to paint the little girl,' Sir John added in a meditative tone.

'You would like to paint her?' said Angelique.

'Yes, she would make a very pretty subject for an Academy picture. I must see if I cannot arrange it with Lady Susan herself.'

By some curious combination of thought, a wild thrill of jealousy shot through Angelique's heart. 'Are you ever going to paint me?' she asked, blurting the question out as if she were ashamed of it.

'To paint you? Yes, some day, my dear child, when I have nothing else to do.'

Angelique turned scarlet.

'No, I didn't mean that, my dear, but one doesn't paint portraits for pleasure, one paints portraits as a question of bread and butter—or cake—or champagne, or something of that kind. And, of course, one cannot sell one's own wife except in a fancy study. When I have plenty of time, and we have plenty of money, I will paint you—I mean I will paint your portrait, and we will send it to the Academy, and it shall hang in the studio, but this season I haven't even time to think of such a thing.'

'Then you don't mean to paint little Miss Dulcie for love?' said Angelique.

Sir John turned and looked at her. 'My dear child,' he said, 'I never paint anybody for love—only unknown painters do that. These matters are all questions of business, hard cut-and-dried business with me.'

'But, John, you are always promising people you will paint them.'

'On the contrary, I am always telling—at least, I am very often telling ladies that I should *like* to paint them—that is quite a different thing.'

'Oh, I see.'

She was satisfied, and yet she had received a shock. She had so long regarded Sir John as a sort of knight-errant—though Heaven knows with what cause—that the revulsion of feeling on discovering him to be the most prosaic and business-like of mortals was intolerable to her. Every day she learned more and more of the reason of Sir John's immense personal popularity. She grew accustomed to have to ask people to dinner whom in the old days she would have regarded as simply being not worth the trouble. She grew to value Sir John's courtliness at even less than its proper value; indeed, the idyllic and charming life which she had once pictured to

herself as the life which she would live with him had long ago vanished into thin air.

So time went on, and as the months slipped by, and she grew to understand more clearly what characteristics were most necessary to the success of a distinguished painter, so she grew to loathe her new life just as she had loathed her life with Ian Ingram. Just, did I say? Nay, with every hour, more and more. Ian Ingram had done generous acts from pure generosity, and almost without hope of return; Sir John Berkeley was never generous except with a purpose; and the bitterest time of all to Angelique was when he was generous towards a certain end—that end personal indulgence and gratification.

CHAPTER XXI

It must not be imagined that Angelique was weary of the outer life that she was living. She had learned to speak of social duties as one would speak of the treadmill, to speak of them indeed *as* a treadmill; but in her heart of hearts she was never weary of the purple, she never wished to lay down the sceptre. It was still untold satisfaction to her to attend some Royal garden-party or a dinner at some ducal mansion; it was still sweet as honey to her that she was able to dispense tickets for the various functions at Burlington House; that she was welcome at all great first nights; that she had now the power to make or mar the fortune of any new entertaining celebrity; that she invariably passed into a dining-room among the few first couples who formed the little procession into dinner; that she was sure of her footing in any capital in Europe in which she and Sir John chose to pitch their

tent for a while. She was never tired of her carriage with its great black horses, its shining brass-mounted harness, its lavish display of the Berkeley crest; she was never tired of making up smart little dinners, or of seeing her name in the papers; it was only the drudgery of card-leaving and the keeping up of a large acquaintance which in any sense bored her.

She certainly did Sir John credit; and if she spent ten thousand a year where she ought only to have spent six, well, she certainly had her money's worth in the way of show. Still, even when a man is at the top of the tree, if the times are bad, the highest must needs be prudent, and live within their means.

'My dear,' said Sir John to her one day, 'we are spending too much money.'

'I don't think so,' said Angelique carelessly.

'I don't *think* about it, I am perfectly sure we are. You must pull in a little.'

'I can't possibly pull in till the end of the season,' Angelique declared.

'My dear girl, you *must* pull in, I tell you. Don't give any more dinners except what you have got invitations out for. I have not done as well this year as I ought to have done; in fact, I have painted six less portraits than I did last year.'

'I wonder how that is,' said Angelique, who did not like the idea of retrenching at all.'

'You have not very far to look for the cause,' answered Sir John, resting his elbows on the breakfast-table and regarding her steadfastly.

'What do you mean?'

'I have got married—that is quite sufficient to account for a considerable falling off.'

'What can your being married or not have to do with the way you paint a portrait?'

'My dear girl,' said Sir John cynically, 'the way one paints a portrait has nothing whatever to do with the amount of portraits one gets to paint.'

'But why not?'

'Oh, other things all tend for and against.'

'How?'

'Well, there are plenty of women—rich women—who would go to an unmarried Sir John to be painted who would not come to your husband.'

'But why?'

'Why? Well, I don't know. It is a fact.'

'I think it is exceedingly nasty,' said Angelique. 'I thought women had their portraits painted because—well, because they wanted to have their portraits, and wanted them done by the best man.'

'In that case,' said Sir John, 'they would not come to me. They would go to Bertram, who is far the cleverest portrait painter of the day, but whose wife is fearfully jealous of him, and invades his studio at all manner of inconvenient times and seasons.'

'Well, John, I never do that,' said Angelique.

'No, you have been most discreet—most discreet in that way; but, at the same time, that is the reason why I have not painted as many portraits this last two years as for a good many years past. And besides that, the times are hard; people haven't got much money to spend in pictures. Why, half the fellows that are on the walls at Burlington House are in pawn to their framemakers.'

'In pawn to their framemakers!'

'Yes. Their framemakers go on providing them with frames; and when they sell a picture, their framemakers take the money—or, at all events, have a lien upon it.'

'Good gracious! Then what is the use of their going on?'

'My dear girl, I don't know, nobody does know. The new generation is an artistic one; the new generation wants to be all great men and women; and every girl and boy brat that can daub the contents of a shilling paint-box over an illus-

trated paper or magazine with any semblance of decency, makes up their mind that they will be *the* great painter of the future. It is just the same with everything else. Look at the *things* that want to get on the stage!'

Angelique went scarlet. That chapter in her past was a chapter which had never been laid open to Sir John's discriminating eyes. Angelique had kept discreetly silent on the subject of her early ambitions. 'Yes, I suppose they do,' she said, with admirable carelessness.

'Do what?' asked Sir John, whose thoughts had wandered into some fresh channel.

'Want to get on the stage, didn't you say?'

'Oh—yes, yes, yes. I was talking to Delacourt the other day about that very thing. "My dear Johnnie," he said, in his peculiar rasping voice, and with his cheery twinkle of the eye, "I assure you, I have regiments of young women come to my theatre every day of my life. It is a regular Girls' Friendly! I used to argue with 'em, and I used to put 'em in the right way, and find out whether they had got any talent; but, Lord love you, my dear boy, I haven't got time for it now! I tell 'em all they are charming, and I put their names down in a big book, and I tell 'em when I have got an opening for 'em I will let 'em know. It is the easiest way for me; and if 'Hope

deferred maketh the heart sick,' why, it's a good thing for them in the end!"'

How well she remembered this very man Delacourt looking her up and down in her Wavertree gown, and how he had told her she was quite charming—quite charming—and that he had no doubt he should be able to find a corner for her by and by. And then he had patted her on the shoulder and bade her good day with a cheeriness which hustled her out of the room before she had realised whether she was standing on her head or her heels. Oh, it went home to Angelique's inmost soul! Delacourt never *had* let her know. She was one of the twelve hundred whose names had gone down in the big book at the Flamingo Theatre. She had met Mr. Delacourt a good many times since that day; she had entertained him more than once at her own table, but he had not recognised her; she had made no more impression upon him than all the rest of the crowd of neophytes, whom he lumped together as a 'Girls' Friendly.'

'They say,' Sir John went on, 'that Delacourt makes love to every decent-looking girl that tries to get an engagement at his theatre; and I have heard they go so far as to say that there is always a clause inserted in his actress's agree-

ments that he shall make love to her when he likes. Ha! ha!—these things are very funny. Why, my dear, I heard the other day that I had married one of my own models!'

'Oh, did you? I suppose all painters do marry their models according to the outside world,' said Angelique sharply.

'I suppose they do. Some of them do in real earnest. Now, there's Puskisson—*he* married his model. By Jove! she's been model to every one of us in her time. People who chance to hear it nowadays wonder what the devil she sat for, for an uglier little woman you couldn't find in a day's march; but I tell you, she had the prettiest naked feet I ever saw in my life. She sat for the feet of my picture of Psyche.'

'*Mrs. Puskisson?*' said Angelique.

'Mrs. Puskisson,' Sir John repeated. 'And Puskisson married her and brought her back, and she showed at a great party that Lady Grantham gave. That was the first time she ever showed as Mrs. Puskisson. I had the honour,' Sir John went on, 'of taking her in to supper, and she had the audacity to ask me whether I was the John Berkeley who had painted that wonderful picture of Cupid and Psyche(which, you know, Lord Grantham bought,

and which was hanging in the gallery at that moment). I replied that I was, and I took her to see it. I went so far,' Sir John continued, 'as to point out the beauty of Psyche's feet. If you believe me, Angelique, that little devil never turned a hair. She said that they were lovely feet, and that she thought there was no more attractive feature in a pretty woman. And that to me who had painted her from the nude dozens of times! It only shows what impudence can do.'

'Yes indeed,' said Angelique. 'Really, I had no idea Mrs. Puskisson had ever been anything of that kind, because she is so awfully sniffy about people.'

'Mrs. Puskisson?'

'Yes.'

'She has to be, but it pays her—it pays her. Well, after all, there was nothing to be gained by her being known everywhere as Puskisson's model. But now you know what is being said about you—that you were one of my models.'

'Nobody can say that I ever sat to them,' said Angelique.

'Well, nobody can say it *with truth*,' said Sir John, 'but there are plenty of fellows who will say that you did, just to seem in the know.

However, about the money, my dear, I find that we have been spending a great deal more than we ought to do, and it will take all my ready money to square ourselves. You must limit yourself—three thousand a year is quite as much as we ought to spend at present until times mend.'

'It will be very difficult,' said Angelique. 'And right in the middle of the season.'

'Oh well, slow down gently—slow down gently. You must have got clothes enough now for the rest of the time, and we have given a great many parties. For the rest of the season we will only give dinners that count; we will only give dinners that mean business.'

'Well, I will do the best I can,' said Angelique; 'but, of course, you set the scale to begin with, and it is very difficult to alter it now.'

'Oh, no, it will be quite easy. It isn't like drying up at the beginning of the season.' He went on opening his letters as he spoke, and presently uttered an exclamation of surprise. 'How come you to owe such a lot of money to Michelle?' he asked.

'To Michelle?' said Angelique.

'Yes, to Michelle—one hundred and ninety-five pounds! Why, what on earth do you mean by running up such bills as these?'

'Oh, that,' said Angelique carelessly. 'Yes, I do owe Michelle something.'

'Something! My dear girl, you are not running up many bills like this I hope?'

'I have got some bills,' said Angelique indifferently.

'And how is it going to be paid?'

'I should hope you are going to pay it,' said she. 'But how came you to open it?'

'It is written to me. This creature says she has asked you over and over again for the money, and that you do not take any notice of her letters, therefore she appeals to me, and says that she will put it into the County Court unless it is paid within three days.'

'What a beast!' said Angelique. She felt that it was no use to shirk the matter now that it had come actually before him.

'Angelique,' said Sir John, 'I believe you are in debt.'

'A little,' said Angelique.

'Well, but look here now; I give you three hundred a year and a very handsome housekeeping allowance—I am not going to have my wife's name bandied about in letters of this kind. Three hundred a year is quite enough for a woman of your position to spend on dress, and you must make it suffice.'

'I can't make it suffice,' said Angelique.

'But you *must*. Goodness knows, you have had to make it suffice before.'

'I never did,' she said.

'Well, if Ingram was a little ass, I am not. Perhaps Ingram made his money more easily than I do, and Ingram had less to lose by having himself talked about. *I* don't keep up a separate establishment.'

'I never accused you of that,' said Angelique, at once turning hard and repellent.

'It would make no difference if you did. I don't keep up a separate establishment, and therefore I am not going to pay through the nose as he had to do. It was only yesterday that I paid a bill of fifteen pounds for something I gave you a cheque for six months ago.'

'What was that?'

'Well, it was for that lamp for the dining-room. I gave you the money for that lamp, you know, Angelique; I gave you a separate cheque that you could go and pay ready money. You would have the lamp to hang over the dining-room table, and you went to a shop where I was not accustomed to deal, and I gave you the money to go and pay for it. What did you do with that money?'

'I am sure I don't know,' she said.

'It is all very well; but if you do this sort of

thing, I shall not be able to trust you at all, and I shall have to pay the house-bills myself, which will be most unpalatable to me.'

'I don't see why you should speak to me like this,' said Angelique.

'Because you have appropriated my money.'

'Your money?'

'Yes, my money. I give you freely everything that I can afford; I never pretended to you that I was a millionaire—you were glad enough to marry me.'

'I am sorry enough now,' said Angelique, putting her head in the air.

'Are you? And so am I.'

'What! You are sorry you married me?'

'Sometimes very, very sorry. You don't seem to realise what I have had to give up in trying to make you happy. It's no use blinking the matter—it has made thousands a year difference to me. I have no wish other than to make you happy, but I cannot give you what I have not got, you must be perfectly well aware of that.'

'You must be perfectly well aware, John, that I cannot dress upon nothing.'

'I don't call three hundred a year and all the presents I have given you besides—all the extras that I have given you—dressing on nothing. I

presume you had not three hundred a year at home just for pin-money?'

'I never professed that I had, but then neither had I a distinguished position to keep up.'

'It isn't necessary to keep up a distinguished position by reckless extravagance and by deliberately deceiving me.'

'I have not deceived you.'

'You have taken money which I gave you for an express purpose and appropriated it to another. I might call it by an uglier word than deception —I might call it *stealing*. I paid the bill yesterday, and I should probably not have mentioned it to you if I had not received this letter this morning; but a woman with three hundred a year for pin-money has no right to run up a bill for one hundred and ninety-five pounds at any one establishment—unless at a Whiteley's, where one bill would cover the main part of her expenditure.'

For a moment Angelique felt cold and sick, for a remembrance came over her of the many bills that she owed in all parts of London, for all sorts of things and at all manner of cost. She looked at her husband, who was courtly and suave and gracious no longer, but stern and angry, with a red spot burning on either cheek, and his lips tightly compressed. For a moment she for-

got that he was old, and that he had been a disappointment to her; she only remembered that he was the arbitrator of her fortunes, that he was the one who stood between her and a world of debt. Moved either by an impulse of remorse or an access of fear, she jumped up from her place at the table, and, with a return of her old girlish impulsiveness, ran around to his side and flung herself down upon her knees beside him. 'John,' she said, 'I have been a fool and an idiot. . . . No, don't stop me . . . I have rewarded you vilely for all your kindness and goodness to me. I . . . I have been mad, I think. I have not been myself. You are not half harsh enough with me. Only bear with me this once, and I will be—so different, so different.'

The anger all died out of his face. 'Angelique,' he said, '*Angelique*!'

So Michelle's bill was paid—and Angelique's soul had passed a step lower down.

CHAPTER XXII

FOR a little time it seemed as if the old idyllic feeling had come back between Sir John and Angelique during the few days following their quarrel and reconciliation. He paid Michelle's bill, only extracting from Angelique a promise that she would never deal again at an establishment which had treated her so dishonourably. He also gave her a hundred pounds towards her other liabilities. No, I am wrong there; he did not give it *towards* her liabilities, but he asked her if a hundred pounds would clear her, and Angelique, who was a coward at heart, was foolish enough to say yes.

She dutifully began a system of economising; but Sir John was one of those people who loved his dinner, and as the first night that they dined alone together the bill of fare was distinctly a meagre one, he took great exception thereto. 'My dear, this dinner is really not reasonable. You had better give that cook notice.'

'It isn't cook's fault,' said Angelique.

'Then whose fault is it?'

'Well—it is cheap, John.'

'Oh, cheap be—well, bothered! We can pull in a bit, you know; we needn't give so many dinner-parties and so on, but we must be fed, we must have life sustained. For goodness' sake, don't give me such a dinner as this again!'

Angelique was very judicious. She carried her chair round as soon as the equally meagre desert was put upon the table and tucked her hand into his. 'Dear old boy,' she said, 'I am sorry your dinner did not please you, but, really, I did it for the best.'

'Of course you did, I don't deny that for a moment, but we needn't reduce quite so far as that. Why, when you have been so nice—and so kind to me—is the time when I want to rejoice and to have a little feast. But, never mind, dearest, I will take you to the Olympus, and we will have a little supper, just by our two selves.'

As the Olympus was at that time the smartest as well as the most expensive supper club in London, Angelique was more than willing to be seen there with her distinguished husband *en tête-à-tête*. So, after looking in at the opera, they went on together to the Olympus, and Sir John gave her the best supper of which the club

could boast. It was an ineffective way of economising; for Angelique's little dinner economies would not have made a difference of ten shillings to their regular bill of fare, while that supper at the Olympus cost at least five guineas. Moreover, Sir John was most terribly ill during the small hours that followed, and Angelique felt all the old disgust and loathing creeping over her again. I think if she had been quite free financially that she would have carried out her threat of ringing for Wilson to come and attend to his master; but there was too much hanging upon it for her to take drastic measures just then, and so she fortified herself for her unpalatable task of mixing mustard poultices for a self-indulgent glutton by taking a strong dose of neat brandy. And in the morning Sir John tottered down to breakfast looking at least ten years older.

'Oh, no—take it away. A bit of dry toast and a cup of strong tea—that's all I can touch. I don't feel very well this morning,' was his explanation to the attentive servant, who pressed a savoury-smelling bloater and scrambled eggs upon him. 'My dear,' he went on, when they were once more alone, 'why *did* you let me eat that *pâté* last night? It was awfully good, but it played the very devil with me.'

'It did,' said Angelique.

'You ought not to have let me eat it, you know,' he persisted.

'Well, I know I ought not, John,' she said, quite pathetically, 'but I was very happy last night, and I—I forgot that there were things you could not eat.'

'Well, well, well, don't say any more about it. I don't know that it wasn't worth it. By Jove, it *was* a good *pâté*, wasn't it? We must go and have supper at the Olympus again.'

'I don't consider that it is cheap,' said Angelique.

'Cheap? Oh, cheap be—bothered!' returned Sir John, who had forgotten his recent desire for economy.

For a long time that was the last that Angelique heard of economising. Sir John got over his attack of disorder, and for a week or two lived in a state of idyllic happiness varied by fits of extreme irritability. They, however, did not last long, but passed off under the sun of Angelique's smiles.

And the bills came in more persistently than ever. You see, she had been married nearly three years to Sir John, and that had been time enough to raise herself a very tidy crop of debts. She lived in a state of continual dread and anxiety. Every day it seemed that some fresh

shock came in the shape of a personal application to Sir John, or a more peremptory demand on pinkish paper. Little by little the light was let in upon him. If Angelique had been wise and brave, she would have drawn up the blind of concealment so that not a crevice should be hidden from sight. But Angelique was neither wise nor brave. In truth, Sir John was the only person that she had ever been afraid of in her life. She was genuinely and actually in terror of him; and when each fresh claim came before him, and he blustered and raved at her deceptions and her wilful wanton extravagance, he always put the same question, and she always gave the same answer. 'Is this the last? Do you owe anything else?' And the answer was invariably, 'There are no more besides this one.' She had never been afraid of Ian Ingram. At worst her husband had bruised her body—Sir John Berkeley had the power, and used it, of bruising her very soul. It was always just the same—a fierce and blustering storm on his part, and on hers protestations and tears, ending in that pitiful love-making by which she was selling her soul. And slowly but surely she grew to fortifying herself after these scenes by a dose of that same cordial to which Sir John had flown the first time that she had seen him upset by over-indulgence in

rich cream—liqueur brandy. She seemed poised like a helpless needle between two magnets of fairly equal strength; and if she passed out of the Scylla of lust and desire, it was only to find herself in the Charybdis of gluttony and self-indulgence.

As time passed on, things did not get better, but worse. The scenes between them became more violent, and love-making less efficacious. There were visitors to the beautiful house in Holland Park, the like of whom had never been within its walls before—visitors of Semitic aspect, with hungry, greedy eyes full filled with a merciless and rapacious desire for justice, and a fixed determination to get it at any cost.

With every day, Angelique's terror of her husband grew greater. She had many pressing invitations to go home, or on different visits, but she refused them all, saying that she could not possibly leave Sir John. The real truth was, however, that she was afraid to leave the coast free for Sir John to gather further information about her liabilities. Her mother fretted not a little that Angelique had so completely cast off her own people as she had done since her marriage to Sir John. But Angelique had drifted into this attitude without in any way intending to do so. During the first year of her second

marriage she had twice invited her mother on short visits, and Gwyn had stayed with her a good deal, but latterly there had been no question of any of her own people coming near her. Angelique had seemed quite to drift away from them; in truth, she was keeping herself at as great a distance as she could, because she was ashamed to let them know the exact position of affairs between herself and Sir John.

The society world guessed little or nothing. When they went out together Angelique was the same *naive* and charming woman that she had been as Mrs. Ian Ingram, a little jealous of Sir John's position—or, I should more correctly say, *for* his great position, always speaking of him as a person of great authority, and exacting a certain homage on his behalf from all those with whom she was brought in contact. The world in the main thought what a delightful thing it was that an elderly man should have found a beautiful young woman who would appreciate him thoroughly. But Angelique knew perfectly well that Gwyn, with her quiet, observant eyes, would be able to read between the lines; she knew that her mother would irritate Sir John probably more than anything else in the world could have power to do, and therefore she felt that they were for the present best apart. And at this time the strain upon her

nerves was more than she could bear; indeed, she frequently had recourse to the help of that dangerous cordial, which gives nothing more than fictitious strength to those who fly to it. With every day that passed by the state of affairs grew worse rather than better, until Sir John almost ceased to be civil to her.

'I think,' she said one day, goaded at last into turning upon him, 'I think that I will go home. I cannot stand this life any longer.'

'You will not go home,' said Sir John; 'you will stay here; you will continue your place as my wife. I shall not give you the chance of clearing out of your liabilities, as that poor devil Ingram did.'

'How do you know anything about my liabilities?'

'I have made inquiries,' said Sir John. 'Ingram went bankrupt because he could not pay your debts. I am not going bankrupt, nor shall I give you grounds for getting a divorce. Things are bad enough as they are, but I am not going to have my name bandied about in a matter of matrimonial scandal. By the bye, I hope that you quite believed me—I mean that you quite understood that I meant what I said when I told you the other day that there must be no fresh debts incurred. You have never been open

with me; and although the last time I paid one of your bills you swore to me that there were no more, I don't believe you. I am quite willing to treat your old debts, as I become cognisant of them, as having been incurred partly through my own fault, but at the first sign of a new one I shall take means to prevent any others accumulating.'

'What do you mean?' asked Angelique.

'I mean that there is a simple way of stopping a wife's credit.'

'What! you would advertise me?'

'I would advertise you. I should hate to do it—I shall not do it unless I am driven to it—but against such women as you there should be some means of protection for husbands. You mistook your *mêtier* when you went in for matrimony—you would have played the other *rôle* to perfection.'

'How *dare* you say this to me?' cried Angelique, stung by her outraged womanhood out of all remembrance of her fear for him.

'It is the simple truth,' said Sir John coldly, 'and it is the more honest position of the two. A man knows what to expect from his mistress, and that is—nothing; but he does expect, and has a right to expect, some consideration from his wife.'

'I suppose I *am* your wife,' said Angelique bitterly.

'Unfortunately, yes,' retorted Sir John.

'In the eyes of the *law*,' said Angelique deliberately.

'Unfortunately, yes,' he repeated.

'I ought to have said—*in the eyes of the world.*' The words dropped out one by one like molten lead. Sir John looked up. Angelique went on speaking in the slow, pitiless, merciless voice of a woman stung beyond endurance. 'You have not hesitated over and over again to throw in my face the fact that I divorced my first husband. I did so by *your* advice. I was prepared, as you must remember perfectly well, to go back and make the best of a bad business. You, *you* advised me to cut myself free while I had the chance—*you* put it into my head that there was another marriage waiting for me. Bitterly have I rued the day! Many times I know that I have been a fool, know I that I have been wanton and extravagant, that I have lost my head over and over again, but I never deliberately deceived anybody as you deceived me. I have been a fool—yes, I know it, and many a woman has been a fool in the same way—but it was *you* who taught me first. But do not press me too hard, do not taunt me any more

with your jeers of not giving me the chance of divorcing you—*you cannot help it if I choose to do it.*'

'It is a lie!' thundered Sir John. 'I have never wronged you.'

'Not in *that* way,' breathed Angelique, 'not in that way, John, *but the decision does not rest with you, but with me.* And if I do not use my power, it will not be because I cannot—you know that as well as I do; if I do not free myself, it will only be because I am proud of the name that you have given me; it will be because I genuinely wish to avoid—a great scandal. I have been through the mire once, and I am not minded to wade through it again. But if you goad me too far, God only knows what will happen to me and to—*you.* I am willing to abase myself to you, I *have* abased myself—degraded myself—and for what? Because of my folly in in trying to do you credit, because I have spent money as I have drunk brandy—to drown my regret for what you taunt me with—having thrown away my first husband.'

CHAPTER XXIII

ABOUT this time Sir John went to Scotland for the purpose of painting the portrait of a very distinguished personage. He was away but little more than a week, for he had had some sittings, and would not have had to go so far to complete them at that time of year, had not his sitter been about to leave England to take up the post of Governor-General in one of the colonies.

He had not been gone out of the house more than a couple of hours when Angelique had a visitor. At first she declined to receive him, said that the servant was to say that she was not at home, that he had made a mistake; but second thoughts are frequently the most prudent, if not the best, and before the man had left the room, Angelique changed her mind and said, 'Well—wait a minute. Yes—perhaps I had better see this person, as Sir John is not at home. Where is he?'

'In the boudoir, my lady.'

'Very well, I will come in a moment.'

Her visitor was unmistakably a Jew, though not one of those terrible persons who had interviewed Sir John at different times, but a neat and dapper little man, well dressed, and with very little trace of the Israelitish thickness of speech. He very soon explained his business. 'Really, Lady Berkeley, I am awfully sorry to trouble you,' he said familiarly, 'but that little bill of Oppenheimer's—I am afraid it will have to be paid.'

'Oppenheimer? But surely they can wait?'

'Perhaps they can, but I am afraid they won't,' said Mr. Moses Benjamin, in his most friendly tones. 'You see, they have got some sort of an idea that all is not quite right between you and Sir John.'

'That is the greatest mistake in the world,' said Angelique with dignity.

'Well, so I told them, because Sir John settled that last little matter of yours without a word; but Oppenheimers declare they must have their money within three days or they will take proceedings.'

'How much is it?' said Angelique shortly.

'Three hundred and twenty-five pounds.'

'Three hundred and twenty-five pounds! Within three days?'

'Yes.'

'I am sure I don't know what all the money is for.'

'Oh, you have had the most of the money,' said Mr. Moses Benjamin affably. 'There was that little kite we flew six months ago, and there was a fifty that Oppenheimer advanced you, and there was that matter of Mrs. Barnadiston's they arranged for you—of course, they all sum up, with the interest and the expenses and that.'

'Oh yes, I am not disputing it,' said Angelique. 'It is a nuisance having to pay it, all the same.'

'Ah yes, that is the worst of flying kites and having little transactions of this kind. I always tell my clients that there is no comfort like the comfort of being a ready-money devil.'

It is no exaggeration to say that Angelique would like to have murdered the affable little man of business—'financier,' he called himself. I think that in all her life she had never known so thoroughly the thirst for blood as she did at that moment. However, she could not afford to quarrel with the little double-barrelled Jew, for of a truth he had done her many good turns, more than any other business man with whom she had been connected.

'Three hundred and twenty-five pounds. And that will clear them entirely?'

'That will clear them entirely. Hard people are Oppenheimers—I wish you had never gone to them.'

'So do I,' said Angelique. 'However, call upon me the day after to-morrow, and I will see if I cannot raise the money.'

She asked Mr. Moses Benjamin if he would have a brandy-and-soda, and as he accepted her offer of hospitality, she rang the bell and ordered it to be brought in; and though she did not join him, when he had gone she poured out half a tumblerful of the neat brandy, dashed a little seltzer into it, and tossed it down her throat, in a way which would have told a doctor that she was well accustomed to fortifying herself in the like manner.

Then she rang the bell. 'Johnson,' she said, 'just call down the telephone and tell them I want the brougham as soon as they can get it ready. And don't let me see anybody else.'

'Not anybody on business, my lady?'

'No, not anybody. I am going out as soon as I can have the carriage.'

'Very good, my lady,' said Johnson.

Then Angelique went up to her bedroom, and having made her toilet, she sat down to think. Three hundred and twenty-five pounds! She knew no more at that moment where to get

three hundred and twenty-five pounds than she knew where to get wings. Three hundred and twenty-five pounds in three days' time—it was a difficult problem. She bit her lips, and then she got up and looked at herself in the glass; then she went and opened her dressing-case; and, taking out a little bottle filled with a clear, colourless fluid, she looked at it long and earnestly, after which with a shudder she put it back again and shut down the lid. No—not *that* way. She had no courage. Three hundred and twenty-five pounds! Ah!—there was Darnley. Darnley was rich, Darnley was well known to be eccentrically generous, Darnley was the most intimate friend her husband had in the whole world, she would go and tell Darnley all about it—at least what would *sound* like all about it. She would tell him that she had got into a difficulty, and that she was afraid of Sir John. Darnley, the head of a great private bank, was so rich that a few hundreds would be nothing to him; he would do it for John's sake—that would be the way. She breathed freely once more, but, all the same, when she found herself in Darnley's office, all her courage oozed out at the finger-tips, and for the life of her she could not have told him the entire truth. Therefore, instead of making a clean breast of it and telling him that Sir John was

very angry with her for having got into debt, that this bill had come in, and that she did not dare tell him of it, and that, if he would let her have the money, she would pay it back as she could, she told him quite a different story. She led him to believe that times had been very bad, and that Sir John was embarrassed; and she implored him, for the sake of their old friendship, to lend her four hundred pounds.

Darnley wrote the cheque like a true Briton. 'Now, my dear lady,' he said when Angelique rose to take her leave, 'don't let Johnnie worry himself about this. I know the times have been very bad for painters, but Johnnie knows me, and Johnnie knows—or ought to know by this time—that he can pay me back or do the other thing at his own time. I shall never ask him for it. If he has so much money by and by that he doesn't know what to do with it, why, he can remember that he owes Ralph Darnley a trifle.'

'Oh, Mr. Darnley, you *are* good!' exclaimed Angelique fervidly. 'You are so good, and you don't know what this will spare me. I don't know what John would say if he knew that I had asked you.'

'What? Doesn't Johnnie know?'

'Well—you see, he is in Scotland, but, of course, I shall tell him.'

'Oh, it will be all right. There is no reason for him to be embarrassed while his friends are able to write cheques.'

If Ralph Darnley had only known it, his kindness and generosity that day sent Angelique on her downward course with an impetus which was little short of diabolical. Having once tasted the sweets of friendship, and discovered such an easy way of getting out of her difficulties, she tried the same game again and again, until there was not a single old friend of Sir John's whom she had not utilized more or less in the same way.

With regard to her old embarrassments, between what she had got from Sir John, or rather what Sir John had been practically forced to pay out for her, and what she had borrowed from his friends, they became rapidly reduced; and then, if Angelique had had the good sense to remain within the limits of her legitimate income, she might soon have been out of all her difficulties.

Unfortunately, even the most good-natured people sometimes want to have loans refunded, and sometimes the most good-natured people are cursed with habits which they are pleased to call business-like. Now it happened that Ralph Darnley was one of those persons. As a matter of course, he had entered Lady Berkeley's debt in

a private account-book, and had put her I O U for safe keeping between the leaves of the same little volume; and then, some nine or ten months after the loan was made, Ralph Darnley had the want of consideration to die suddenly, and his executor, who found far less money than the family had expected, naturally came down upon Angelique for the payment of the money, with the proper interest accruing thereto. Unfortunately, his letter fell into Sir John's hands. This really happened by an accident, but Sir John's fury knew no bounds.

'I insist upon knowing what you are doing with all this money!' he stormed. 'Since we have been married, thousands and thousands of pounds have passed through your hands. What have you done with them?'

'I don't know,' said Angelique sullenly. 'They have gone.'

'I believe Ralph Darnley was not the only one. Come, you had better tell me all about it.'

'Well,' said Angelique, 'I was awfully pressed that week you were in Scotland when you were painting Lord Danebro's portrait. I could not bother you for it then, and I was—I was desperate, and I did go to Ralph Darnley—and—that's all.'

'And to whom else have you gone?'

Angelique remained silent.

'There have been others,' he shouted. 'I know there have been others! And you are running up fresh accounts here, there, and everywhere—I know it—I have got proof of it. But, mark my words—*I will put a stop to it!*'

He stayed to parley no further, but went out of the room, crashing the door after him with a violence which seemed to shake the very house. Angelique sat still at the table. She felt, by that curious certainty with which one recognises the great moments of life, that the great crisis had come between them. What was he going to do? His last words were that he would put a stop to it. How would he do it? Surely, he would do nothing to openly disgrace her. He had no grounds for seeking a divorce, else she knew that she would have to look in vain for mercy from him.

She sat there until a servant came to clear the breakfast-table, then she wandered about the great house wondering—always wondering—what was going to happen, what new calamity was about to fall upon her?

Sir John did not return. Luncheon was served, but Angelique ate nothing. 'Give me a liqueur brandy,' she said. 'Yes, put the decanter there. Don't wait—I will help myself.'

She helped herself to nothing excepting to

the contents of that innocent-looking flagon of crystal.

'I will see no one,' she said, when the pretence of a meal was over.

'Very well, my lady.'

'You understand, Johnson, nobody at all—not even Mrs. Lennox. I may be going out presently.'

'Very good, my lady.'

But Angelique did not go out. She felt, if a blow was going to fall upon her, that it would be best for it to fall there under the shelter of her own roof.

So the day wore on. Sir John was still absent. Dinner was duly served, but Angelique scarcely touched it.

'Shall I keep dinner hot for Sir John?' the butler inquired.

'I think not. I think he would have come in if he had been returning. Something can be cooked for him if he does come later.'

'Will you see the evening papers, my lady?'

'Yes—thank you.'

She had taken some grapes, not because she wanted them, but solely in order that the servant might ask her no more questions as to what she would have. She took up the paper which lay on the top of those which Johnson had laid down

beside her, and turned with a feeling of relief to the distraction of its contents. But the first paragraph which caught her eye was one containing her own name. It was not, strictly speaking, a paragraph; it was an announcement —an announcement signed 'John Berkeley,' and telling the whole world that he would no longer be responsible for his wife's debts.

So the blow had fallen. She sat there staring at the cruel words with wide-open blinded eyes which saw nothing. Through her distraught brain there ran a thousand fierce and wretched thoughts. What would they say at home? What would they say in the world? What would become of her? How would she live? Should she remain? What should she do? Would he turn her out of the house, or would he expect her to go on living with him as if nothing had happened?

There was always that little phial in her dressing-case, with its clear, seductive contents, such as would give her freedom from all her troubles for ever. But no—she could not take *that* way—she had broken her nerve with brandy. She sat quite still in her place—thinking, thinking of the hopeless ruin and shipwreck that had come into her life, thinking of this hard and cruel old man who had dragged her down from the

honourable estate of wifehood, had dragged her down to be the basest of the base—a creature—a panderer—a moral and mental drunkard—ere he had turned the limelight of the world upon her, to her everlasting shame and degradation. Then her thoughts went back to that other one, back to the little husband who had reeked of the city, who had gone after other gods, who had struck her in the face before her own servant. Then back to that other one who had taken all her fresh young heart's love and cast it in the dust without a regret—back to the mother who had made her sick unto death and weary of her natural home, of the haven to which she could no longer fly for shelter—for she had practically burnt her boats behind her. So this was what she had done with her life, this was the outcome of trying to do without love, this was the outcome of marrying for a home, this was the outcome of setting the experience of the whole world at defiance. Gwyn had been perfectly right, Gwyn had been so wise—so far-seeing. And this was the end of it all! The end of her girlish ambitions, the end of her brilliant marriage, and she was left like a rudderless ship on a hostile sea to drift—God alone knew whither.

The room in which she sat was one of the most artistic and beautiful in London. In spite of her

trouble, from the mere force of habit, she had changed her day-gown for a rich silken robe such as she always wore when they were dining alone. She was still a beautiful woman of gracious presence, even as she sat there numbed and crushed by this last degradation of all that had fallen upon her. And through her distraught brain there rang one awful note—this was the end of all her ambitions—this was the end of her passion for the limelight.

She turned her wide-open eyes from the silver centrepiece, with its dainty deckings of flowers, and she stretched out a shaking hand towards the crystal flagon which the servant had left beside her. She was too great a coward to go for that colourless liquid upstairs and to face the colourless unknown blank that would lie beyond it. Instead, she stretched out her hand for that deadlier foe which would stupefy her senses only for a little time, bringing its own retribution with it.

I have no more to say. The story of Angelique is not a far-fetched one; alas, it is not an uncommon one; but it is the story which may be true of the life of any woman who marries from other than the one motive which has been found to make marriage an honourable and a bearable estate since such bonds became a civilised insti-

tution. A comfortable home—what is it? A silken cushion—a flounce of lace—an indigestible dish! A marriage of ambition—well, what does that ambition bring? Too often, too often the bitter realisation of a truth that was written more than three hundred years ago by the wise man of Avon—

'O, the fierce wretchedness that glory brings us!'

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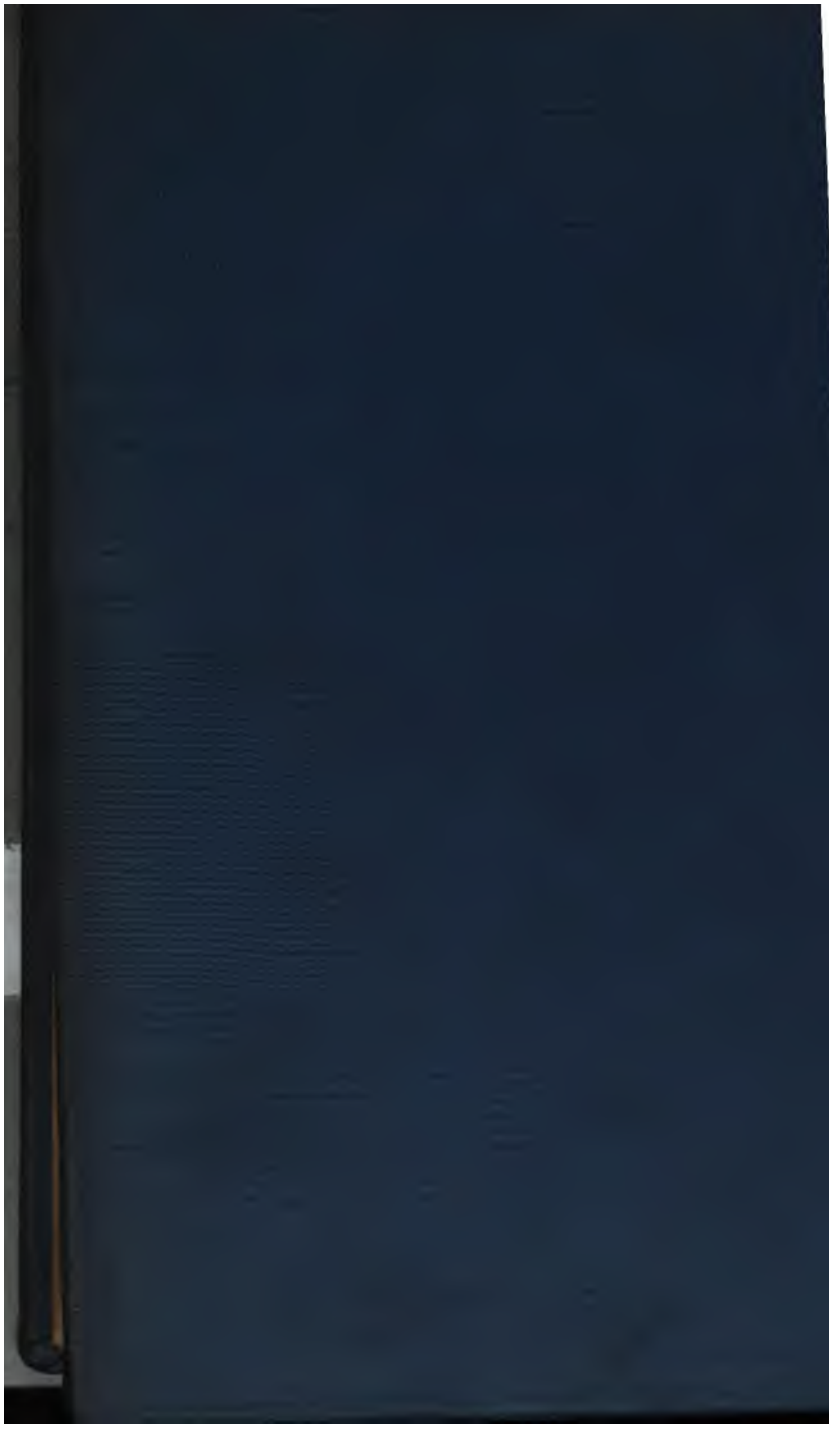
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